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MARJORIE MOXIE
HER EXPERIENCES

BY

MAUD MORRISON HUEY

ILLUSTRATED BY

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MARJORIE MOXIE

HER EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER I

SETTLING OLD SCORES

"It's such a comfort to be happy, and so useless being miserable."

Marjorie sat on the back porch hulling strawberries. Her face and hands were smeared with the crimson juice. She finished a final handful and crowded it on top of the quart measure.

"There! That's heaped and running over. Let me see! Where am I! Oh, yes! 'July 4.—Dick and I followed the circus parade. There were three elephants and two tiny cub bears in a cage. We patted the Shetland ponies.—' I can afford to do a quart for that. My! We had a time. We never got back to dinner." She emptied the generous measure into Mother Moxie's granite dishpan. With one hand she turned a page of the soiled diary that lay on a chair beside her.

"'July 21.—' That's next. Let's see what happened then! '—Left Jane's sunbonnet on the bank while Dick and I were wading, and Duffy's old hog ate it up.' I don't care, it was an old one. She need not have made such a fuss." Marjorie began to hull again desperately. "—Eight whole gills for something I wasn't to blame for. How could I tell that Duffy's hog was such an old cannibal? And anyhow she wouldn't have eaten it if Jane hadn't put sugar in the starch; so in the long run you're to blame, Missy, though you sit in there so fine eating stuffed dates while I hull strawberries for the old thing."

Marjorie consoled her tortured appetite with a plump and luscious berry. "Let's see! What else have I got to do penance for! It'll be some consolation to know." She set the pan on the step and wiped her hands on her apron. Leaning back with her head in the ivy vines, she read.

"'Aug. 1.—Hid away from mother when she wanted me to pare apples for pies.' I mean to skimp that quart, for I couldn't have any of the pie. Dick never saved me a smell of his. Stingy thing! I don't care, I got even. I found his gum on the window sill and rolled it in sand. Mother said we wasn't to keep our gum on the window sill anyhow. It served him right.

"'Aug. 31.—Lost mother's screw-driver down in the mill yard where Dick and I were gathering pitch. It fell in a hole in the old pine stump and I couldn't get it out. We boiled the pitch in an old tomato can and made pitch gum.'

" 'Sept. 6.—Had a fight with Mamie Anderson over my seat.' —'Fore I'd try to crowd somebody out of a seat that had been theirs since Adam! I've been No. 23 ever since I went to Central. Oh, well, a quart of strawberries isn't anything to the satisfaction I got out of that! There are certain principles that ought to be defended, and I think I can see where meekness ceases to be a virtue.

" 'Sept. 16.—Wore Jane's blue beads to school and lost them.'

" 'Sept. 29.—After school Dick and I went to see Benny Williams' pet coon and didn't get home till dark! I gave him the crusts out of my dinner pail. You ought to have seen him put them in the water and then skin up a tree and stretch out as easy as you please while they soaked!' I couldn't blame him. They were tough old things. Some of Jane's experiments. I pity her man if she ever gets one.

" 'Oct. 3.—Fought four boys who were picking on little Lummy Beezler and got the sleeve torn out of my new plaid dress; also lost one of my good hair ribbons.' I suppose I am a great trial to mother.

" 'Oct. 17.—Skipped school at recess to carry Annie Murry's kitten home.' It cried and clawed terribly and it was most a mile; but I am glad I did for it is a terrible thing to be a stray kitten and at the mercy of boys. Most boys are brutes, though Dick isn't.

" 'Oct. 31.—Cooned pumpkins of old Merriweather to make Jack-o'-lanterns, and took mother's pink wax candle to put in the Goliath.' I never *can* see that cooning and stealing are the same, especially when the pumpkins are rotten, but mother says it is. Old Merriweather is too stingy to live, anyhow. Oh, yes, and we put tick-tacks on poor Mrs. Gilbert's windows and brought on her ague. '—And Dick and I carried Jane's crazy quilt up on the barn and made it into a flag.' —A very eventful day.

" 'Nov. 1.—Went nutting with the Cameron girls without asking mother. Hurt my foot so I couldn't wear my shoes to Sunday School, and mother took the nuts.' I believe I shall do a small quart for that. They were beautiful shoes—patent leather. I think one ought to be just to oneself.

" 'Nov. 9.—Pulled Janie Keeler's hair for watching old Buxby kill a calf and saying she liked it. She told her mother and her mother came to see Momsie.' I don't care. I am glad of it. I only wish I'd pulled it harder, little heathen! —And mother didn't look a bit sorry. It's a great satisfaction to know that whatever you do your mother will deal justly with you. I very seldom get more than I deserve.

" 'Nov. 22.—Dick and I ate some of Jane's frosting.' I don't care, she wouldn't even give us a taste and it was pineapple flavoring. Jane knows I'd rather have pineapple than anything,—and I helped her seed a whole bowl of raisins. Such a fuss over a spoonful of frosting! A body ought to have some privileges on Thanksgiving Day.

" 'Nov. 30.—Mulligan's cat had kittens—four of the dearest little things. Mr. Mulligan was going to kill them. He didn't even mean to save one of the prettiest. Old Topsy Mulligan hid them under our shed.' I don't see how I was to blame for that, but I seem to have been. Of course, I might have betrayed them to their bloody pursuer, but I didn't, and the few pieces of breakfast cakes I managed to smuggle in my apron pocket only saved the family digestion. Mother said they were Mr. Mulligan's kittens, but they weren't, they were Topsy's. That is one of the delicate points upon which I can not agree even with mother.

" 'Dec. 1.—Cut Jane's embroidery silk in little bits.' That was mean. I'll heap the measure up for that. But she looked so precise and scrumptious in her new blue dress and lace collar, and I was tired and dirty and almost froze, too (Dick and I had been skating), and I wanted her to sew on a button; still one oughtn't to lose one's temper, and perhaps I shall do an extra quart if the strawberries hold out. Goodness knows I hope they will, but it's doubtful," as she whisked over another page.

" 'Dec. 10.—Forgot mother's errands and went with Nellie Coot to help carry their baby home.' It's a terrible little thing, all chaps. I was listening to Nellie about how they came out and that is what made me forget. If I had a chappy baby I should try to do something to heal it up. The errands were very important as the minister came to our house to supper and we didn't have any butter.

" 'Dec. 23.—Raveled out my winter hood to crochet father some wristlets for Christmas.' I don't care, I didn't have a thing for father, and I always hated the hood. I can crochet beautifully too, mother said so. Oh, yes, and I traded my amber beads to Hattie Mintey for a postal-card album to give Jane. I don't know why I couldn't for they were mine. It's hard to scrimp at Christmas time. I made mother a lovely cotton cat. If I ever marry I hope my husband will be rich and will give me an allowance.

" 'Dec. 26.—Dick and I and Giddy Leason got to snowballing the old mill and we broke seventeen lights.' Father had to pay for half of them. Giddy Leason said we didn't, but we did. Dick and I wouldn't tell a lie. I don't care, I hit most. Giddy Leason can't throw for sour beans.

" 'Jan. 7.—Jane and I had a spat over the dishes. I think I ought to rinse them if I have to wipe them. It's horrid being dictated to. I snatched the dipper and burned Jane's hand. Mother made me carry my own in a sling all the rest of the day.' It was horrible for Dick took his new bobs up to the plank hill. Who could coast with their hand in a sling? Of course, I was sorry about Jane; but I still think I ought to have rinsed the dishes.

" 'Jan. 20.—Left mother's best pitcher on the well curb all night. It was full of water and froze and broke of course.' That is just my luck. I was just filling it when Dick called me to the barn to see his new skees.

" 'Feb. 4.—Dick and I went skeeing, and I lost mother's muff.' I was trying to look like the picture in her book of poems. That certainly looks very grand. I like to live up to things. Anyhow it is hard to skee with one skee, and Dick and I only had a pair between us.

" 'Feb. 14.—Sold my new sponge and pencil box and three slate pencils and a button buzz to Jessie May for ten cents to buy teacher a valentine. I got a lovely one, all angels and forget-me-nots—the dearest thing with a little verse.' Mother says that it means just for father to buy me more, but it don't. I can wash my slate with my hand, and I'd have lost the pencils, and the box isn't any good—I never keep my pencils in it—and I've stood on the floor three times over the button buzz already. Teacher did look so pleased. I ain't sorry a mite."

Inside the clock was striking ten, and Marjorie's chair came down with a thud. "Twenty quarts and all this and this and this and this to do yet," and she ran a sticky finger down each succeeding page. "My!

it takes me to do things, but it takes much longer to undo them. I shall probably have to finish up with cherries, only they are not ripe yet. We will never eat so many strawberries, and poor mother! Think of doing them up! To say nothing of bankrupting father! It is awful to have to buy imported strawberries in May, but I couldn't wait. It takes for everlasting to even read my sins, to say nothing of making good. Supposing I just cancel a lot, who'd ever know it? I don't have to do it, anyhow. Nobody else does. Jane is just as mean as I am, only she keeps it inside her. I'd rather let it out. I'd rather do things and then pay for 'em. It's fun to hull strawberries. I don't mind it a mite—" She grabbed up the pan. "—And I shan't quit till the last thing is paid for; till the accounts on the old book are all squared and I've earned my right to a new one. Do you s'pose I could take a pen and begin on that nice clean thing and this one all black and blotted and horrid? I always have done penance on my birthday and I always expect to. I never expect to be so good I won't have to. But it's something to begin each year clean. I think I—I should be swamped if I let it go two years. I always think that no matter how much mother punishes me, that isn't making good myself, and when I read back through my old diaries if I find one thing that hasn't been settled right I feel mean and sneaking. It seems to ease my conscience to do strawberries or something.

"Last year I did carpet rags, an ounce apiece, and the year before that I pieced on mother's nine patch. I love to read my old diaries, but if I should cheat in this one thing I should want to burn them. When I do something so perfectly horrible that I think there isn't any use trying to be good any more I look back and find something much worse that I did last year, and it comforts me. Wouldn't it be awful to just let them accumulate year after year till one had to reckon for them all in a bunch? I love to think that I'm beginning new, and at the end of the year I shan't have but three hundred and sixty-five against me if I do one every day. When you think of three hundred and sixty-five, twenty or thirty crimes in a year isn't so many, is it? When I look at it that way things seem to brighten up." Her nimble fingers made the hulls fly. "If I do twenty more before dinner, that will leave only a few for afternoon.

"Jane, oh, Jane! Would you mind telephoning father to send up another crate? They shrink a great deal in doing up." Marjorie consoled herself. "They will not look so many when they are in cans. Say fifteen or twenty quarts—that isn't a one too many for such a family, only they seem a great many because they are a penance. I think one more crate will clear me, however. Say, Jane! Do I smell something cooking? Where's mother? Oh, Jane! You needn't bother about that birthday cake. I shan't mind not having it. What are we going to have for dinner! Oh, have beans! Do, Jane! Beans are so very satisfying. I'd dearly love to have beans on my birthday."

"Yes, have beans!" Dick came panting up from the barn and snatched a handful of finished berries from Marjorie's pan. "Gee, but they're good! How much longer are you going to work, Sis?"

"Till I get through, and that'll be never if you stand there and gobble as fast as I hull, Dick Moxie." Marjorie spread her apron over the ravaged pan. "I should think you might have the decency to hull for yourself at least."

"Well, if you want to sit there and mope all day, you can. I'm going to the beech woods after May flowers this afternoon." Dick marched off tantalizingly.

Marjorie grabbed up the despised diary and crossed off for "Aug. 1," savagely. All the spring she had longed to go to the beech woods, and now—her fingers turned into fairies in their dexterity to remove hulls.

"You could easily have made it a pint instead of a quart," Jane suggested after it was all over, and Marjorie came panting up to the chamber with the stained diary clutched in one hand and a clean apron and hair ribbons in the other. "—It would have done quite as well. It seems to me—"

"Well, it needn't 'seem' to you. They're done, and I didn't skimp 'em, and I'm glad of it. Where's the comb, Jane Moxie? Have you had it? It isn't on the dresser, it isn't here, and it isn't here."

Marjorie went over the stand and the whatnot like a whirlwind. "I should think you might help me find it instead of standing there like a dummy; you had it last."

"So a person would judge by the looks of your hair," Jane made mild retort. "Now that you are twelve, Marjorie, you ought to take more pains with your hair."

"Well, I'm not going to. I don't see as being twelve makes a bit of difference. I didn't feel any more jar when I went over than Dick and I did when father took us over the county line. We looked all along the road for it. I suppose we thought 'twould be about like mother's clothes line. I remember where father said it was there was corn growing on either side, and so I suppose eleven and twelve will run right together and you won't notice the least change in me, my dear good sister. I don't feel it coming, anyhow. I imagined there would be symptoms as there is with measles. You remember father said I shouldn't have the croup any more when I got to be ten, but I did, I had it worse'n ever, and I'll probably have a good many things worse'n ever. It'll take more strawberries another time. Well, I hope you haven't swallowed it. It's mother's best one." She rattled through a stack of magazines.

Jane came over from tidying the closet and picked it up from the window sill. "Never mind tearing the house down," she reproved. "If you weren't so harum-scarum, it might seem good to be orderly for once, and on your birthday."

"Yes, it might, but it doesn't. It seems horrid. And if being comfortable is harum-scarum I'm glad I am most of the time. I should hate to think I would never be again." Marjorie snagged the comb through her ragged locks viciously. "There! Dick's going! Here! Tie this!" She snatched the ribbon up from the stand and turned to Jane. "Just any old kind of a bow. It don't matter. It'll come down, anyhow. There!"

She grabbed the clean apron and ran through the hall and down the stairs, shedding the old one as she went. "Oh, Dick! Dick! Dick!" she called. "I'm coming. Here I am. Wait for me!"

She overtook him sitting leisurely on the front walk flipping his jackknife. "Oh, Dicky! You're a dear. You *did* wait. I was so afraid you wouldn't, I ran. I know there are millions of them—little feathery hepaticas, and spring beauties, and anemones, yes, and squirrel's corn—I'll bet there's squirrel's corn already, and yellow adder tongues and bloodroot. Oh, I wouldn't have missed going. I'm going to be perfectly, perfectly happy. It's such a comfort to be happy, and so useless being miserable. Did you ever think of that? That's a wonderful thought. It came to me when Jane was tying my hair so tight that my ears stood out. I wonder if being orderly, as Jane puts it, improves my appearance as much as it hurts my disposition. Do you think that being skinned is especially becoming to me? —And, oh, Dick! Isn't it a perfectly lovely thing to have a clean conscience at least once a year?"

CHAPTER II

A BEECH WOODS CHAPTER

"I wonder if I shall ever find words big enough for the woods."

Of all delightful spots the beech woods excelled them all to Northrum village folk—a long low slope backgrounding the town in spring with a beautiful line of shimmering green known only to young beech leaves, against which the painted cottages rested like flowers in the grass; in summer deepening to vivid emerald, alive with light and birds; transformed in autumn to rarest quivering gold. Verily to walk there was to foretaste the golden glory of Paradise. Gold above, below, mid-air, drifting, dreamy gold. Gold to make spendthrifts of the children, who waded and plunged and wallowed in the reckless extravagance of plenty.

But this was spring, and all things were in the delightful crisp lettuce-green stage. Did you ever smell tender, newborn beech leaves on a warm afternoon in May? Marjorie began to sniff hungrily before they reached the stile, and when she stood upon it looking in, her hands came together in a rapture of ecstasy.

"Oh, Dick! Is it flowers? No, it isn't. It smells like roses. Oh, what is it? It's like entering the land of fairies. Oh, Dick! Did you ever see anything so perfectly deliciously beautiful? Oh, if I could always live in the woods like this I should never be wicked. Do you know, no matter how mean I was, or what horrible thing I was about to do, if I came here I should never do it. It comes over me like a big wave, and something breaks loose inside me and is washed away. And it isn't just seeing things, though Heaven couldn't be prettier." She stretched her arms to take in the glories,—"And it isn't just hearing all those birds, nor smelling those beautiful smells; it 's like a great wonderful Presence that comes down and lays its hands on one. I should feel it if I were blind and deaf like old Brewster Smead, I know I should, Dick. It—it makes me swell in *here*. Oh, such a feeling! Dick, does it make you swell too? I should love to be an Indian. Just think how lovely it would be always to live in such places! To watch the little wee bittie leaves being born even,—watch them getting green, greener, greenest, and the tiny pink posy-babies crawling out of their winter blankets. Do you suppose it makes an Indian swell inside as it does me?

"There! I knew we should find them. Look, Dick! Lookee! Look! Did you ever see so many perfectly beautiful darlings? White ones and blue ones and pink ones, yes, and variegated. Oh, let's not pick any but just sit down here and enjoy them! Oh, I'm glad I didn't see one till these. It's like running upon a feast all spread. I do so love to have nice things surprise me."

They sat on a gray boulder, lichened with little tufts of red and green moss and draped with a feathery spray of squawberry vine. Over their heads a maple sapling drooped fragrant yellow tassels of bloom. At their feet were the hepaticas.

"You little dears!" Marjorie reached over and stroked some of the fluffy bonnets. "You all came in a party, didn't you? And that tall stately one, dressed in white, is your chaperon, I guess. You're having a delightful time and we won't disturb you, though I should like to take you home to mother. I wonder if it hurts you much to pick you? I don't see how it can and yet I always feel as though it did. If I ever pick a flower I always shut my eyes up tight and do it as mercifully as I can. Do you shut your eyes when you pick a flower, Dick?" Marjorie lifted her chin from her hands questioningly. "I don't like to hear the little sound they make when they break, do you?"

"Flowers are plants. Only animal life can feel," Dick enlightened grandly.

"I don't know whether they can or not, Dick Moxie. Just because they can't talk.—A fish can't talk, but you know a fish can feel, else why does it squirm and act so!"

"If you feel that way about it I shouldn't think you'd fish, Sis," Dick reproved scathingly. "What makes you?"

"I don't know what makes me," Marjorie admitted weakly. "'Tain't because I don't know they feel and suffer too, and I'm a murderer every time I throw one up on the bank to flop and wiggle his poor little life out and get sand in his eyes. It's all the more awful because he can't talk; if he could we wouldn't do it. We wouldn't dare to. If I just let myself stand and watch him do you think I could bear it, Dick Moxie? Could you? No, I just shut my eyes and go after another one, same as all the rest, and that's how we keep from thinking what a wicked thing we've done."

"I never saw anybody love to land 'em any better'n you do," Dick accused her.

"I s'pose there's a streak of cannibal in me same as there is in you; but you ought to be the last one to throw it up to me, Dick Moxie, a boy who can poke out fish eyes for bait when he runs out of angleworms, or stick a poor little crying frog onto his hook. Oh, Dick! I never can forgive you for that—never, never! You know I always throw back the minnies."

"Well, I'm not so awfully conscientious," admitted Dick.

"You ought to be, though." Marjorie was very serious. "Some day I mean to settle all these questions, and then I shall live up to them; not to, is being a hypocrite. Of course that's why God put such thoughts in our heads—if there wasn't anything in it they wouldn't come. Just because nobody else thinks them isn't any excuse for us. Somebody has to have them first. If I ever *do* make up my mind I shall be faithful. It's just as wicked to eat fish somebody else has caught as it is to kill them yourself"—Marjorie's conscience pursued her—"for you see, there are so many people who *will* eat fish and if I eat one that would have satisfied somebody else another will have to be caught, that's all." It was plain logic, she convinced herself.

"Oh, there are so many things! When one begins to think there is no end; one can think on and on and one question is sure to lead to another. There are a great many things that I must think of by and by." She sighed heavily and crept nearer to Dick.

"Well, don't begin on the fish question until after vacation," he advised her. "I'm going to Whalen Lake this summer, and I *did* mean to fit up two poles, but if you're going to do so much thinking maybe one will be enough."

"Oh, but I'm not, not so soon," Marjorie interposed hurriedly. "Oh, Dick, *are* you *sure?* Did father say you might? Do you suppose mother will let me?

Oh, we'll take our lunch and a bottle of cold tea, and have our fish poles and things hanging on behind, just as old Jimmerson does when he goes past! Oh, won't it be jolly, jolly! Even if it is wrong a *few* more won't matter, do you think it will, Dick?" Marjorie tried to appease a smarting conscience. "Anyhow, I am not really sure that it *is* wrong yet.

"Oh, Dick! Couldn't we get some sweet corn and build a little fire by the side of the lake and roast it? You know, like we did when we went huckleberrying. That was jolly fun. Is there anything in the world as good as roasted corn when it's all smoky and tastes of outdoors? Oh, I *do* hope mother will let me. I guess I am a little young to settle such serious questions; only I think after this I will always put them in a bucket of water. It seems more merciful, don't you think so?" Having temporized to her satisfaction, Marjorie drew a breath of relief.

The sunshine splashing on the green leaves above seemed to be spattering in a golden spray upon the mold-brown carpet about them. Where the green canopy was draped away, patches of the bluest of blue skies showed. A thousand birds marveled with them. Little wild things, scurrying around through the leaves, ceased regarding them as intruders. Light perfumed zephyrs sprang up from nowhere and went nowhere. One freed Marjorie's soft hair from the confining string; another came and made it into becoming tendrils about her face.

"Dick, did you ever think how the leaves are like tiny boats anchored to the trees by their brown stem ropes?" She brought her eyes down from a long contemplation of the maple sapling's mysteries. "Just hundreds of little green boats tugging to get away into the great sea. If they could, they would just flutter a little way, then fall, wouldn't they? They would never get away out there where they wanted to go, and yet they are impatient to try." She grew thoughtful. "Such thoughts, when they come, go way deep in and make me think things that I can't say. It's in the woods that I always think things too big for words. I wonder if I shall ever find words big enough for the woods?"

They went farther up on the hillside, and there were the white shoots of bloodroot piercing the dark mold, and oh! most fragrant Mayapple blooms,—white, white like a crown on the hilltop. Marjorie got down on her knees to smell them. She drew the satiny blooms tenderly through her fingers. One succulent stalk snapped and left its waxen treasure in her hand.

"Oh, Dick! it bleeds," she said remorsefully. "See! Two tiny drops of blood. Isn't it an awful thought that no matter how I try I can never put it back, and how easily I destroyed it, and how long months and months it was waking to life in the little brown seed hidden from sight. Flowers bleed, and trees bleed when some horrid man sinks his cruel ax in their side," she philosophized grimly.

"Yes, and you dig out the poor potatoes' eyes, and strip the corn of its ears, and behead the helpless cabbage," Dick finished. "You might as well be as miserable as you can while you're enjoying it. Just think how you sink your teeth into the melon's crimson heart, and bite into the poor apple's cheek. Say! How much'll you give me to see a bird's nest, Sis?"

"Oh, where, Dick!" Marjorie's face was aglow once more. "Is it in the alder bush? Oh, I know. It's in that sumac, isn't it? Now I see it. Oh, what kind of a bird is it, Dick? Do you think if we should climb real still and peep down it would frighten her?"

"It may be a thrush or a catbird," Dick suggested. "Anyhow, she isn't on her nest. I saw her fly over into that hazel thicket." A frightened protest went up as they began to mount. Three limbs high and they looked down upon it, snug and brown on a sumac bough, five little blue-green eggs of transparent beauty snuggled in the down. Marjorie almost lost her hold in a convulsive effort to express her delight without hands. They crept down as stealthily as they had come.

"To think that the woods are full of beautiful secrets like that," she whispered as she clutched Dick's arm at the bottom. "A thousand birds and each with a nest. Oh, Dick! doesn't it make you feel like holding your breath?"

"I can't say that it does, not for long at a time," Dick admitted. "You'd better not try it, Sis."

"Five tiny eggs and no one ever saw them before. And to think they hold wings, beautiful wings to beat the air with, and strength to carry them away, away, to a southern land, yes, and bird songs enough to gladden a whole town as big as Northrum. Five little eggs, Dick, and think of all the music they will make in the world!"

"Yes, if they hatch," put in Dick, "and if the cat don't get them, or an old hawk—or something. There is always an if, you know."

"Yes, there is always an if," sighed Marjorie.

"Do you know, Dick, when I grow up I don't believe I shall be a fine lady. I used to think I should be, with a very long train and a string of diamonds, but really I don't believe that I will, do you? I think I should prefer a wild life better. I shall build me a bungalow in the woods and be an artist or a writer or something. I think I should love to do something like that—and a train would be sure to be torn. Do you think I was cut out for a fine lady, Dick?"

"Well, I hardly think it." Dick eyed her critically. "That is, you don't show any of the earmarks now.

But you are only in the jellyfish stage and there's no telling what you may develop."

"If I were already grown, I should buy this beech woods and build right there under that spreading tree," Marjorie went on. "I should have a one-story cottage of three rooms. Three rooms are a great plenty when it come to sweeping and dusting."

They sat down side by side and planned it out—how it was to have a broad porch in front and a dear little cupola on top where one might sit and watch the birds build nests through the whole day long if one wished. They argued childishly over angles, Dick contending that the house ought to set with the compass, and Marjorie insisting that it face the tree at all hazards. They finally compromised by turning it square southeast, which after all is as much a direction as plain east or south, is it not? And who could see it, anyhow, in the woods?

Tired of planning, they dug "potatoes" from the roots of the spotted adder tongue, and Marjorie found a handful of crimson squawberries for dessert. Near a fallen log, Dick dug up something green and pungent.

"Oh, leeks!" Marjorie pounced upon him. "Dast you eat one? What will mother say—and Jane? Just one! I will if you will. Oh, they are good!"

It was only when the Northrum whistles began to blow that they thought of going home.

CHAPTER III

MARJORIE'S WATERLOO

"I never can remember anything that isn't good sense."

" 'By the flow of the inland river,
By the flow of the inland river,
By the flow—' "

Marjorie sat crosslegged on the floor, holding fast to her toes. She was rocking back and forth, back and forth, miserably.

" 'Whence the fleets of iron hath fled,
Whence the fleets of iron—' "

An open book lay on the floor before her. She poked at it spitefully. "Horrid old thing!" she said.

" 'Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Where the blades of the grave-grass—' "

Dick, down under the window, was yelling like an Indian. The sun came pouring in through the drawn white curtains and lay in a square of gold, Marjorie in the midst.

" 'Asleep are the ranks of the dead;
Asleep are the ranks of the dead;—' "

she went on in a monotone. Tantalizing odors came in from out of doors—sweet clover, and apple blossoms, and mother's bed of pinks below. An oriole somewhere in the maples invited her to come out. The little fingers of breeze that came in and tugged at her stray locks were maddening.

"'Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray.'"

She rattled off the last four lines frantically, then she went over to the window and looked out at Dick. He was putting out the croquet set. His cap was off. The wind was whisking his hair up in little challenging tufts. The striped mallets and red, white, and blue balls were scattered in the grass all about him.

"The red's mine! The red wins!" she shouted down at him. "Oh, Dick! Whatever made you think of it? We haven't had a game this year."

She grabbed her sunshade off the wall, and gave the despised book a final poke with her toe as she rushed out and down the steps, three at a bound.

"I'm afraid Marjorie won't have her piece," remarked Mother Moxie at the dinner table. "There are seven verses, you know, Marjorie."

"Yes, I will, too!" defended Marjorie. "I've got the last four lines of every one of the seven this minute. There isn't a thing to learn, only 'one,' and 'other,' and 'laurel' and 'willow,' and 'blossoms' and 'garlands.' Do you want to hear me rattle them off?" Father Moxie smiled across his plate. He had a silent sympathy for his wayward daughter.

"No, I guess we'll postpone the pleasure till you have it all. I suppose you'll surprise us on Decoration Day, won't you, Marjorie?"

"Of course I will. I most always do, don't I, father?"

"I guess that's no joke," said Dick irreverently.

"Well, Dick knows, too," retorted Marjorie tartly. "I just surprised him bad enough—five games out of six. How's that for high? Reds for me every time!" She passed up her plate for a fresh supply.

"I don't see how Marjorie expects to get through if she doesn't study." Sister Jane brought back the unpleasant topic. "I have my piece all by heart, and all there is to do is to practice expression and gestures, of course."

"Oh, bother the gestures!" Marjorie threw out her long arms emphatically. "They don't worry me. I can put in plenty of them."

"You leave the gestures to Marjorie, she'll fix them all right," Dick commended. "She's a brick!" This was the usual ultimatum of his remarks, and seemed to keep him and Marjorie on pleasant terms.

"I don't care! I hate learning pieces," Marjorie said, as she went back to the neglected book. "Everybody knows that old thing, anyhow. It's older'n the hills. I don't like it. I never did."

"Well, you insisted on having it," Sister Jane accused her. "Now, I think Henry Ward Beecher's address on 'The American Flag' or 'Valley Forge' would have been much better for you."

"Yes, or 'Independence Bell.'" Dick popped his head in at the door without warning. "I'm learning 'Custer's Last Charge' and it's a crackerjack.

"'Out swept the squadrons, the fated three hundred,
Into the battle-line, steady and full;
Then down the hill-side exultantly thundered,
Into the hordes of the Old Sitting Bull.'"

He quoted a few sample lines.

"What's 'hordes'?" questioned Marjorie. "Why don't you say ranks? It's easier. 'Into the ranks of the Old Sitting Bull'—that sounds just as well."

"But it wouldn't be right, Marjorie," reproved Sister Jane. "When you are quoting an author you are supposed to quote entire," she said with an air of superior knowledge.

"Well, I don't see what's the difference, as long as it sounds as well. Now, in my piece it says: 'Asleep on the ranks of the dead,' but I say 'Asleep *are* the ranks of the dead.' That's easier to remember, and it's better sense. I can't remember anything that isn't good sense. Even the author himself couldn't object to the change; do you think so, mother?" Mother Moxie smiled.

"The reason I picked this out," she explained with a sudden burst of confidence, "wasn't it's special worth—I hope you don't think I like anything so tame—but it's easy. Now, just listen here:

" 'Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;—
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray.

" 'Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the laurel, the Blue;
Under the willow, the Gray.

" 'Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the roses, the Blue,
Under the lilies, the Gray.' "

Dick clapped a hand over her mouth to prevent her going on to the bitter end. A mumbling sound came from between his fingers.

"Well, you can all see that's easy," gasped Marjorie, extricating herself. "A body could jingle on like that forever." She escaped through the door, grabbing a cookie from the sideboard as she ran.

"Marjorie is such a harum-scarum," said Mother Moxie anxiously. "She's too full of play to study."

"Yes, but it seems to me she ought not to be allowed to disgrace the family," remarked Sister Jane, who rather enjoyed hearing Marjorie properly reprimanded. "She ought to spend a certain time each day—"

Dick followed at Marjorie's heels. "Ho, Sis! Wait, Sis!" he called; but she had reached the back shed and was disappearing up the ladder to the loft when he overtook her. He made a grab at her vanishing petticoats.

"I'm after my kite," she said without turning round. "Don't you feel that breeze? There never will be another such day, never. Haven't we waited for it?—and it's here.

"What are you standing there for like a stodden bottle? I'll 'tend to this. You go and get the twine, and that ball of red yarn in mother's workbasket, and your straw hat if you're going, and bring me my brown sunbonnet. It hangs on the kitchen door, I guess," she called to him over her shoulder.

"Hangs?" Who ever knew you to hang anything? I'll look for it under the bed or on the parlor table," he taunted as he sped away, for an afternoon kiting was not to be despised by Dick.

Racing over the commons, trying to get a good start; sitting among the dandelions watching the kite float up and up, like a great gaudy bird, dipping and soaring, to mingle at last with the woolly white clouds that blotted the blue; lying back under the shade of a great horse-chestnut dreaming, he forgot all about "Custer's Last Charge."

Marjorie lay with her head in the dandelions. She was curling one. "The Blue and The Gray" had been blotted out by the wonderful yellow and green.

Meanwhile the inevitable Decoration Day exercises crept nearer.

The next day Dick raised the pole. Of course, Marjorie was his right hand man. It took every spare minute of time from early morning till late at night, they scarcely found time to snatch a hurried bite. Even Father Moxie was enthusiastic over the results. The twenty-five cent flag tacked to its top, fluttered out bravely. The next day was Sunday. Monday, after school, they made garden, and Tuesday they raked the lawn, and Wednesday the bird got out. Thursday Marjorie sat in a wretched heap on the parlor floor, with the calendar spread out on her lap.

"I thought Decoration Day was on Monday!" She hurled the words at placid Sister Jane, who sat darning her best mitts.

"No; on Friday, dear," corrected that superior young person gently.

"What! To-morrow? No, it isn't." Marjorie's fingers ran over the last few days desperately. "Yesterday was the 28th, and to-day's the 29th, and—"

"To-morrow's the 30th," finished Jane.

Marjorie went digging into the bookcase after the "Standard American Speaker." "I'd like to know where things go to in this house," she grumbled. "I put that book right on the third shelf, I know I did; but 'tain't here, and 'tain't here, and 'tain't here." She searched the music rack and the table drawer. "I wish folks would leave my things be. They're always sticking them somewhere." She confronted Jane: "If you know where 'tis, you'd better tell, so there, Miss! Oh!" Her eyes spied it, poked into an obscure corner behind the paper basket. She dragged it forth and straightened the warped covers.

To the back porch she betook herself, away from the sight and sound of everybody, with four feather cushions and father's big carpet hassock, and the look of a hopeless martyr. The morning-glory vine drooped little unpopped pods down upon her unheeded. The nesting swallow in the eaves begged and scolded her alternately, and finally went back to her nest unsatisfied. Mother Moxie went about getting supper on tiptoe. Dick came up the path whistling, but stopped short, gave a prolonged "whew," and finally sneaked around to the side door.

A sound as of distant thunder issued from among the cushions. Now and then a long, energetic arm swirled up out of the chaos.

" 'All in the battle blood gory,—
All in the battle blood gory,—
All in the battle blood gory,—' "

Mother Moxie wanted some wood, but she remembered a few sticks left down in the basement sooner than intrude upon the enthusiasm of the back porch.

" 'In the dusk of eternity meet,—
In the dusk of eternity meet,—' "

Sister Jane came to the door with Marjorie's muddy rubbers just picked up from the parlor floor; but she retreated with the reproof on her lips unuttered. Marjorie's energy impressed the whole house with a sense of impending doom.

It was dusk when she came in, pale with unusual concentration and tragedy in her eyes. She shut the "Standard American Speaker" together with a vicious snap. "There now! I've got it as good as I'm going to get it. If I can't say it, I can't, and that's all there is of it." She went out after supper to finish up the bonfire she had commenced.

Excitement reigned on the morrow. Blacking of boots, and pressing of ribbons, and a mad rush through drawers and closets. Marjorie stood before the big glass in the sewing room fixing her hair when Dick burst in upon her. "Oh, Marj!" he cried, "you can't guess who's here." He waited for the troubled

Marjorie to take a dozen pins from her mouth and ask, "Who?"

"It's Uncle Alfred, from Fremont. He's down in the parlor with father this minute. Oh, leave that string be, Sis, and stop primping! Come on down and see him!"

"You let go of me, Dick Moxie!" Marjorie jerked away from his familiar touches. "I'm not going down. I don't want to see him. I don't want to see anybody. Oh, Dick!" Marjorie threw herself down on the chintz lounge in the full abandonment of misery. "I can't say it," she wailed. "Oh, Dick! It's all mixed up,—roses and laurels and garlands. What shall I do? I shall disgrace father—and—and—him. Hide me some place, Dick, do,—in the chest or the closet."

Dick tried to comfort her as best he could with the unmartialed lines of "Custer's Last Charge" rioting through his brain. "Oh, I guess you've got it all right, Sis," he said. "It'll come to you at the last minute." He had unlimited faith in the power of things to come at the last minute. "Why! When you get up there, it'll seem as though you had known it all your life," he told her. He spoke of the crowded Northrum church as "a little handful of folks," and alluded to Marjorie's previous attempts as "eloquent orations;" but his doleful countenance promised poor Marjorie forlorn hope. Mother Moxie came to the stair door and called. "Come down, dear! Your Uncle Alfred is here."

She clung to Dick on the stairs. "Oh, Dick, I can't go. There's a hickory nut in my throat. I just can't speak it."

Dick gave her a sympathetic hug. "Cheer up, Sis! You're a brick," he said.

"This is our little girl," Father Moxie was saying. "Come here, daughter, and shake hands with your Uncle Alfred! You'll hear her speak up at the church. Marjorie beats them all when it comes to speaking pieces." Dick understood the spasm that crossed Marjorie's face.

"Never mind! We're in for it," he found a chance to say as they marched to the church in a body. "You've met your Waterloo all right; but you can face the music without flinching!" She flashed a grateful glance upon him.

The church was a mass of flowers. It seemed to Marjorie she should smell May lilies all the days of her life, and dream of dead soldiers every night. There were ghastly crosses and wreaths and anchors that she felt must haunt her forever. A huge flower bell hung like an impending doom over the place where she must stand to speak. Her eyes glistened, her cheeks were like two flaming coals as the program proceeded. Mother Moxie thought she had never seen her look so pretty.

Sister Jane got up and recited "Decoration Day" without a blunder, and when she came to

"Honor the dead with richest oblation,
Cover their graves with laurel and palm."

she held out the maple branch she had been carrying, as though decking an unseen grave. Then three small girls stood up and sang "Deck Them with Flowers" in a screeching little treble that set Marjorie's nerves on edge. Oh, the horror of knowing she was fifth on the program! As number four went stumbling through his oration, the hickory nut in Marjorie's throat increased in dimensions, her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth, her eyes seemed to be transfixed with the horrible swinging bell.

"Marjorie Moxie!" The dread summons came at last. She arose and started forward though it seemed her quaking knees were poor things to sustain her. Once under the great bell she courtesied to the sea of faces below. There, near the front, was Father Moxie smiling up encouragingly, and Uncle Alfred, kindly curious. She smiled miserably back at them, though no words came from her dry lips. She saw Jane's long face, prophetic of defeat. Then she began:

"'DEAD! Is it possible? He, the bold rider,
Custer, our hero, the first in the fight,—'"

A look of horror spread over her face, but she kept on.

> "No eagle's wing could fly higher, fly wider,
> Than the force of his valor, the strength of his might,
> 'Dead! our young chieftain,' the battle forsaken,
> 'No one to tell us the way of his fall!
> Slain in the desert, and never to waken,
> Never, not even to victory's call!' "

Marjorie's eyes sought miserably in the crowd for Dick. They found him at last, a crouching heap against the back wall. Still she plunged madly into the second verse.

> " 'Comrades, he's gone; but ye need not be grieving.' "

Mother Moxie moved in her seat uneasily. Her face was anxious. There was puzzled surprise in Father Moxie's eyes. And then

> " 'Out swept the squadrons, the fated three hundred,—' "

On to the bitter end. Sometimes her voice faltered and the words seemed strange to the listeners; but mostly it rang out clear and true, and her long arms swept in the gestures mightily. She dragged poor Custer along to a bloody climax, till

> " 'Thicker and thicker the bullets came singing;
> Down go the horses and riders, and all.' "

She had caught the spirit. Her face was full of the tragedy. She clasped her hands and sprang forward in terror to

> " 'See the wild steeds of the mountain and prairie,
> Savage eyes gleaming from forests of mane—' "

Oh! Would Dick never stop looking at her? His eyes were like two consuming fires, hounding her from the field. At last she let her voice sink down into the tender reverence befitting an end. The crowd was breathless. It waited to applaud her. She looked toward the wall, but Dick had disappeared. She rushed down the aisle. Mother, with wondering eyes, beckoned to her; father reached a proud hand to detain her; Uncle Alfred smiled his congratulations; but she hurried blindly past them all.

She found him on a stone out behind the church shed. She fell upon him weakly. "Oh, Dicky, Dick! how could I do it!—how could I, Dicky, dear!" She groveled in her humiliation. "There wasn't a thing in my brains but that, not a thing. I had to say it if I opened my mouth. And how could I help learning it—how could I! You dinged it in my ears eternally—you know you did! Oh, Dick! Can you forgive me? I'll go right in and tell them this minute. I'll—" But Dick held her in a vise. There was everything but anger in his face. He swung the surprised Marjorie clear off the ground.

Inside they were calling off his name. The sound came through the open window. " 'Custer's Last Charge,' by Richard Moxie,"—then an awful silence followed. The pair outside the window were tiptoeing away, Marjorie leading Dick by the finger. "I was afraid I should laugh," she whispered, holding her mouth. "Oh, Dick! wasn't it awful—awful? Didn't you get hot and then cold? I thought I should faint."

Dick drew a long breath of relief. "It wasn't as awful as it might have been. It might have been me. Whew! but that's a relief!" He took out his Sunday pocket kerchief and mopped his brow. "I feel as though I had been let down. You certainly were good to me, Sis. Don't expect me to return the compliment, though," he said, tweaking her arm appreciatively. "My! how you did light into it! Sailed right along, ke-bumpity-bump. You made up half of it, and guessed at the other half. How did you do it, Sis?"

"I just had to go on after I'd got started," she explained.

"That child certainly has brains," said Uncle Alfred to Father Moxie, as they walked home. "You want to bear that in mind. They're not just ordinary brains, either," he added, and Father Moxie smiled, with a twinkle in the corner of his eye.

CHAPTER IV

MARJORIE SHOWS UNCLE ALFRED THE TOWN

"Isn't it strange that no matter how we plan, we have to do just what we have to?"

"So you are to be my guide, are you?" Uncle Alfred smiled kindly upon his young escort. "And we are to see the town together this beautiful spring morning. I am sure I shall enjoy it immensely."

"Dick could have done it much better than I," Marjorie admitted meekly, "if father hadn't sent him to the country. I'm afraid I shan't be able to interest you."

"Allow me to be the judge of that." Uncle Alfred held the gate open for her gallantly. "Let me see! What do we visit first?"

"I thought I would show you the fountain," Marjorie suggested questioningly. "Do you care for fountains? This is a very nice one—a woman with four heads, you know, and a lot of little cupids playing around her. There is a lovely pool of water and a nice little patch of grass and some seats."

"Let us make for the fountain by all means. Your picture conjures up all that is desirable, especially the seats."

"I thought we could rest and—and talk."

"So we can, and get acquainted. It seems to me we're not very well acquainted."

"No, we're not," doubtfully.

"But we're going to be."

"Are we?" Marjorie peered timidly up at her dignified companion. She had always stood a little in awe of him. He walked with such a military bearing and wore such sleek black clothes. He looked unusually aristocratic this morning in his flowing black tie and white waistcoat. It didn't seem as if they could have a thing in the world in common. She had on her best chambray frock, starched very stiff in honor of the occasion, and Jane had done her hair. It was tied up smartly with bows on either side. She felt of it occasionally. It wasn't exactly comfortable. It felt goose-pimply all along her neck. Uncle Alfred raised his black silk umbrella and put it over her head, and peered down at her admiringly.

"You look very sweet and charming this morning," he remarked with his most elaborate gallantry. "I surely feel honored to walk out with so fine a young lady." Marjorie blushed, stammered, and looked unhappy. She pulled nervously at a skewy front breadth. Evidently they weren't getting on very fast.

"What's the matter? Didn't I say that nicely, young lady?" he questioned her. "Am I losing my old knack of turning a fine compliment?" He would have to find the key to this queer little niece of his.

"It seems to me you didn't look half as pleased as you ought to."

"Didn't I look pleased? I tried to. It's hard to look pleased when you aren't," Marjorie remarked bluntly. "I—I don't like compliments. I know they aren't true. I know how I look without being told. My hair pulls like sixty. It always pulls when Jane does it, and I never let her only on special occasions."

"Is this a special occasion?"

"Yes.—And my dress is ironed all slaunch ways," she continued. "I was in a hurry to play ball with Dick and didn't take pains. When you don't say anything I think you haven't noticed it; but when you do, I'm sure you have and are trying to cover it up. I don't like people to put on. I like them to be natural."

"I assure you I was sincere," Uncle Alfred defended himself. "I hadn't noticed the front breadth, honest hearts! I had only noticed your cheeks, they are very pink and match the bows; and your eyes, they are like diamonds, if you will permit me to say so."

"I'd like you better if you wouldn't," Marjorie told him simply. "Besides, I don't think that's a good simile, for eyes really aren't like diamonds, now are they, Uncle Alfred? If you had said they were like mother's jelly tarts that would have been better."

"But it wouldn't have been poetic. Eyes like jelly tarts doesn't sound well."

"No, but it's truer," Marjorie persisted stubbornly.

"Oh, all right." Uncle Alfred bobbed about nimbly to keep the umbrella over this eccentric little person. "If you don't like compliments I propose we stop in here and buy a little taffy of a more substantial sort," as they neared a grocery store with its display of fruit and garden truck in front. "I suppose you won't object to that sort! Let me see! You are especially fond of chocolates and caramels, aren't you? Most young ladies are, I believe."

"If it wouldn't matter to you," Marjorie suggested timidly, "I'd rather have pink wintergreen or striped stick, if you please."

They found the greenest seat in the little park, under a lovely willow tree, and then they opened the sacks. There were three of them, candy and peanuts and fruit. Marjorie clapped her hands enthusiastically. They ate the peanuts and threw the shucks in Uncle Alfred's silk hat. The fountain lady threw little silver streams of water up into the May sunshine to break into glistening spray mid-air, and fall back musically into the pool at her feet. Birds were gathering about the rim for their morning bath, and some few who had come earlier, sat on a sunny limb, preening their feathers, pausing now and then to sing a few notes of thanksgiving.

"Don't you wish that you were little and that it wouldn't spoil your clothes?" Marjorie remarked, as a happy robin flew down and began to dip its crimson breast. "Just think; he won't fade or scrunch or—or wilt! It must be lovely never to be starched."

"Are you starched?" Uncle Alfred pinched the sleeve of her pink frock between his thumb and forefinger.

"Terribly. Jane always makes them stand alone. I suppose they look better, but I detest them. I can't want to look nice bad enough to want to be miserable. Do you like things starched?" Uncle Alfred rubbed his head.

"We had a washwoman once who starched my shirts all over. No, I didn't like that."

"They were scratchy in the armholes and made a horrible noise whenever you did anything!"

"Just so."

"And they made you feel as though you ought to sit a great deal straighter than you want to and that it would be a sin to laugh out loud!"

"It did."

"Then you know just how I feel. This is my very best dress, that is, it's my very best everyday dress. I wish I'd worn my turkey-red calico. Jane can't starch that, thank goodness; starch shows. Would you have liked me just as well in my turkey-red calico? It is a very comfortable thing. You can't burst any buttons off it for there aren't any, just a puckering string in the neck. There isn't any belt in it. It is very handy, especially when one is extra hungry. Would you have been ashamed of me? I think it looks very well. Jane doesn't."

"Indeed, I should have been proud of you in spite of your clothes. Do you know you recited 'Custer's Last Charge' very wonderfully yesterday? I was immensely proud of you then. You are a natural orator."

"Oh, Dick could have done it a hundred times better," Marjorie protested. "I—I left out some," she confessed with humiliation, "—and a lot that I said wasn't in the book. Did you notice that?"

"All the more wonderful," persisted Uncle Alfred stoutly. "Instead of being overcome with stage fright, when you couldn't remember what you set out to, you invented a subterfuge; that's genius. No danger of you getting side-tracked. Your wits will carry you through all right, little girl. Just go ahead! I'm not afraid but you'll do the right thing in the right place, and not leave any long, distressing pauses. That's it. To be able to see something quick that'll fill the bill; not stand wringing your hands while the umpire counts you out. You're going to be a winner. Do you know I came here once, almost thirteen years ago on special purpose to see you?"

"Did you come on purpose to see me?" Marjorie's face shone. She slid nearer on the bench.

"Yes, I did. And you were the reddest baby and the wiggliest one I ever saw. You just lay in your mother's lap and kicked yourself crimson, and when you'd got your tiny fingers fastened on the thing you wanted, do you suppose you would let go? Not much. You hung right on and braced your little body and held your breath. Once it was my whiskers." He chuckled over the reminiscence. "You kept your hold till you had a few all right, and your tiny fingers had to be loosened one by one. I admired your grit. I said then you were going to amount to something, and I believe it—I believe it."

"Oh, do you?" Marjorie was delighted. She danced up and down on the park seat till she tore a pearl button off the back of her frock. "Oh, I wish I knew what! It's so hard to decide. I want to be something big—a writer, or an artist, or an—an orator. Are those good things to be, Uncle Alfred? —And then, too, I want to marry and have a large family. I should dearly love to have little girls to make dresses for when I get too big to play with my dolls. I should miss them so if I hadn't them, and I dearly love to comb real hair. A doll's hair comes out so terribly. I should dearly love to be somebody, but I've planned on a large family. Do you think it would be possible to have both? I've thought about it a good deal; but I don't see how I can, for if one had a large family it would take one most of the time mending holes and sewing on buttons, unless, of course, they took after Jane; but they wouldn't. I mean, too, to see that my children have all the cookies they want. My cookie jar shall never be empty. I'm afraid if I live up to all that I shall not have much time for anything else, aren't you? I *could* be a writer. I should dearly love to write books; but I hate to give up my family."

"Yes, that would be too bad." Uncle Alfred's face was solemn. "After all, perhaps that is the worthiest ambition. But if you ever do write a book, remember I'm to have the first copy!"

"I've thought that perhaps I could write the book first and have the family afterward. Wouldn't that be a very good way? Isn't it strange that there are so many things it seems as though a person ought to do when perhaps they will never do any of them? Now, I may be a dressmaker or a milliner or—or a puckery old maid, there isn't any telling. Isn't it strange that no matter how we plan, we have to do just what we have to?"

"And it's always best."

"Yes, or if it isn't we can make ourselves believe that it is. We can hatch up all sorts of terrible things that might have happened if it had been the other way, and so we can make ourselves content; but really, Uncle Alfred, is any way best but the best way, no matter what we try to make ourselves think?"

"It's hard to stand in any one place and see all sides at once," Uncle Alfred told her. "There's just one All-wise One who knows what's best for us, little girl." But Marjorie sighed.

"Anyhow, it doesn't pay to be miserable," she said, brightening. "Do you suppose the robins bother about what's going to happen?"

"Not in the least."

"And they're happy. See how they splash and dive and spatter! Oh, Uncle Alfred, would you mind letting me have the sack!" They had eaten the last of the peanuts and Marjorie had dropped a final handful of shucks into the hat. "I—I want it to pop," she explained, as Uncle Alfred handed it over. She took it by the neck and flattening a place for a mouth-piece, blew till it bulged like a toy balloon, then hitting a smart rap with her free hand she caused an explosion that frightened all the singing birds from the sunny limb.

"You may pop the others if you wish," she offered generously. "Do you love to pop sacks, Uncle Alfred?"

"Didn't miss a chance when I was a boy," he told her.

"Did you ever put any firecrackers in a glass bottle?"

"Yes, and under a tin pan."

"It makes an awful noise, doesn't it?"

"Lovely."

"Dick and I have to go outside the corporation to celebrate. Corporations are a great nuisance. A body really can't do themselves justice inside them."

"No, they can't."

Marjorie stood up and shook the pink skins off her dress front. "Well, I suppose we ought to be going if I'm going to show you the town. What do you care for most? There's the library and the new church and the academy—" she pointed them all out—"they look lovely from a distance, don't they?" She caressed the green grass under foot regretfully. "And, anyhow, a bird's-eye view is about as good as anything. It's a long ways over to the academy—'most a mile. Oh, Uncle Alfred, do you care for dams? I should dearly love to go there. The water froths so beautifully and—and roars. We'll go way out on the fishing board to sit. Are you sure," she questioned doubtfully, "that you'd rather see the dam than the academy? Of course, you hadn't—"

"I'd a thousand times rather," Uncle Alfred assured her.

"Really, academies are very poky, and so are churches and libraries. If one has seen one—there isn't much variety. I can tell you all about them. The new church is made of gray stone and cost one million dollars. It has a lovely belfry, and the steeple is ever so much higher than the courthouse flag pole. There's a lovely angel in one of the windows, too.

Perhaps I ought to show you the angel; she is really worth while. The academy is red brick, and there are ever and ever so many windows with 'pin-heads' sticking out of them, and the library is gray and uncomfortable and one mustn't talk or whisper.

"Isn't a librarian a terrible person? She wears glasses and looks over them. I think librarian is just another name for old maid, but I'm not sure. It isn't to be wondered at, though, when it gives me cold shivers to stay in just a little while; what would it be if I had to make a business of it! I always feel as though my face was in danger of freezing that way, too. So now you see you know all about them, and you haven't stirred from this lovely seat. Isn't it much agreeabler to see things sitting still?

"You dear old fountain lady!" Marjorie went for a final sip from the crystal waters. "I really hate to leave you. You look so lonesome standing there and not able to say a word for yourself. It must be terrible to have so many mouths and not be able to say anything. I'm sure I should die. And having one's feet in water all the while I should think would get monotonous to say the least. I'm sure I feel sorry for you, you dear old thing!" She patted the cold stone countenance. "—But it must be some consolation having four heads. It seems to me you might be able to think of a way out of it. I wish I had four heads, though I shouldn't want hair on any one of them, especially if Jane insisted on combing it; but the heads would be convenient, at times, don't you think so, Uncle Alfred?—especially when it comes to remembering what one does with things. If I had four heads I think I should reserve one especially for that. It's annoying not to be able to remember. But it isn't any wonder when one has so much to put all into one small head that things get terribly mixed. It's like mother's workbasket, even mother cannot keep that straight.

"If I had four heads I don't believe I would keep one for Sunday, would you? I was thinking it might be nice, and not put anything in it but what was proper. One could always have it in order and know right where their quarterly was and everything; but really I don't believe I would. It would make me one-sided, I'm afraid, there'd be so little in my Sunday head. If I had four heads I expect it would be just four times worse than it is now. I know it's that way with drawers. Once I had one to keep all my things in and it was always a sight. You couldn't find a thing if you tried, so mother gave me two more." Marjorie sighed. "I promised mother to straighten them out to-day, but I haven't done it. Isn't it terrible the condition drawers can get themselves into?—Ribbons and collars and shoestrings—and—when they get tangled— I guess I'm just as well off with one head, don't you?

"Uncle Alfred, where do you suppose she came from," feeling the fountain lady over interestedly. "I was wondering if, when people petrified, they didn't keep them for such purposes as this. I don't see why they couldn't. She certainly looks very natural and as though she had gone through a great deal. If a woman ever did live with four heads I should like to read about her and see what she did with them.

"You lonely creature! I wonder if you would like me to kiss you!" She balanced herself on the pool's rim. "I wonder if any one ever did. You look so sad, it almost breaks my heart to look into your eyes. You must try to cheer up, and please don't choke. I'm always afraid lest you should forget which way the water was going. There might not be any one here to bail you out." Marjorie danced away, holding to Uncle Alfred's hand. All her shyness had worn away. They were getting on famously.

"Do you know," she confessed, "I love old people much better than I do young people? They are so much better company. I hope I shall be interesting when I get old. I want my hair to be snow white, and I mean to wear a dear little cap with lavender strings. I want to learn a great many things about books and outdoors, so I shall have lovely things to talk about, and I shall always carry a few wintergreens in my pocket. I think it adds to a person's attractiveness. Don't you think it is lovely to be old and interesting?"

"I find a great many young people who are extremely interesting." Uncle Alfred patted the little pink arm that had slipped through his. "If they keep on till they are old they will be very good company indeed."

"If a body could only be sure of being a nice, agreeable old person, it would be some comfort while growing up, wouldn't it? Were you ever harum-scarum when you were young, Uncle Alfred?"

Uncle Alfred laughed over her earnestness.

"Well, I should say I was, terribly so. There wasn't a thing going on that I wasn't into, and every button was off at night. I used to fasten my trousers on with shingle nails. My mother said I was the worst of four boys."

"And yet you grew up to be a lovely old man." Marjorie drew a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"Did I? That's the nicest compliment I've had in many days, my dear."

"I'm so glad, especially about the buttons," said Marjorie. "Buttons are one of my trials. Even when they're all eyes and sewed on with coarse thread they don't stay on. It seems to me they ought to be sewed on with wire or—or something."

"Yes, or riveted on."

"Mother and Jane seem to think I lose them on

"*Were you ever harum-scarum when you were young, Uncle Alfred?*"

purpose. I guess it's as much mortification to me as to anybody else to have buttons of a half a dozen different kinds up and down my back. Once I lost one of my bug buttons and had to put on a horse. I thought I'd have it all animals, anyway. Did you ever see any bug buttons, Uncle Alfred? They're lovely—a big green bug right in the middle of them; only they're bad about getting wrong side up. It doesn't look just right to have bugs crawling up your back both ways. I have to sew on all my own buttons this year." She sighed heavily. "I guess Dick and I won't play much croquet."

"When I was a boy I used to love to play 'Peeler'," Uncle Alfred remarked meditatively.

"Oh, did you? So do I." Marjorie clapped her hands. "'Peeler' and 'Duck on the Rock'. Did you play 'Duck on the Rock'?"

"Yes, and 'Pom Pom Pull-away' and 'Cranny Crow'."

Marjorie's eyes shone with honest admiration.

"Did you ever play 'Dog and Deer'?" she asked solemnly, as though this were a final test of Uncle Alfred's superiority.

"Many's the time," he assured her. "Used to get out in the brush patch with Anson and just go it. Hear us a mile."

"So can they Dick and I," Marjorie admitted.

"Mother don't allow us to. I s'pose that's where a good many of the buttons go."

"But it's fun. I had long legs. Anson was short. He used to fall down."

"Dick is always the dog. He's a good howler. Were you a good howler, Uncle Alfred?"

"There wasn't a one that could beat me," he boasted proudly. "Just lift my nose right up and turn into a hound any time."

"Oh, could you? Please, *please* do it!" she begged. "I'd dearly love to hear you. Not a full-sized howl, you know; but a little teenty one for a sample. Just put your nose up and go easy like! Nobody will hear you. Quick! Now! There isn't a soul in sight. Oh, I never heard any one who could howl like a hound." Uncle Alfred looked about guiltily. Really the coast was clear. There didn't seem to be a soul anywhere. It is hard to regulate a howl. Truly he meant it to be a teenty one but at its approach the white kitten that had been climbing a cherry tree over the fence scurried for the house with a tail twice its normal size, a dog ran out of his kennel with wrinkled lip, growling defensively. A woman, with a dust cap on her head, opened the door and looked about with troubled eyes. Marjorie laughed. It was very, very funny. She hugged Uncle Alfred's hand appreciatively.

"Oh, to-night let's go out to the barn and all howl.

Mother won't let us howl in the house. We'll take turns howling. I know you can beat Dick."

The dam met their highest expectations. It was seething and foaming with fresh rains. The water tugged and tore at its obstruction and went tumbling over with a mighty roar. They walked across by the narrow plank instead of the safer foot-bridge for the sake of the delightful creepy sensation that went up and down one's spine. Half-way across Marjorie caught Uncle Alfred's hand.

"Right here now! Look down! Do you feel it? Isn't it lovely? Oh, I love to look down and see it boiling! Does your hair stand up any? I'm always hoping mine will, but it never does. What can I do to make it? I've tried everything. I've gone up in Barnby's elm ever so much higher than Dick, and I've jumped out of the barn window ever and ever so many times. Did you ever cross the ocean, Uncle Alfred? I believe that would be about my size. Dick says his hair has stood up. I believe it must be easier for a boy's hair to stand up than it is a girl's, though Belinda says hers stands up just as easy. Mine must be the lie-down sort for I've done ever so many more things than Dick. I can hold my nose under water while I count a hundred, can you? The nearest my hair ever came to standing up was when I jumped out of the swing and caught my dress on a crab-apple limb. Dick couldn't get me down and neither could mother. They had to call in Mr. Humphrey."

They gathered handfuls of stones from the pebbly shore and sat down on a little dry mound and tossed them in, seeing which could make the grandest splash. It was fun to toss tiny bits of bark on top and watch them come over. Marjorie lured him into the vain wish that he were boy enough to remove his shoes and stockings.

"It must be terrible to be too big on the outside when you're not on the inside," she sympathized. "I hope if I have to grow up I'll grow up even all over. The water looks lovely, doesn't it? The only thing that consoles me when I want to wade and can't is thinking of the poor fountain lady who has to and probably don't want to. If there wasn't anybody to tell them, how would a body know what they ought to do except by the feeling of want to? If we were all alone on a desert isle what we ought to do would be to wade, wouldn't it, because we want to? Wouldn't it be lovely to be cast off on a desert isle?"

They sat on the bank casting stones till the sun was high overhead in the heavens. Marjorie saw it.

"Oh, Uncle Alfred! And we were going to have strawberry shortcake for dinner, too," Marjorie commiserated. "What would you ever do if we missed it! Let's hurry!" She grabbed up her hat. "Mother makes lovely shortcakes, four tiers high. Are you especially fond of shortcakes?"

"Yes, very."

"So am I. Have you got very much appetite, Uncle Alfred? I have. It's one of the principal things about me. I wish I hadn't. It's terribly mortifying; and it isn't convenient, especially when you have to wear left-overs. My bands are always too tight." They took hold of hands going back. Marjorie pointed out the pickle factory, the stove works, and the wagon shops. "Now, if anybody asks you, you've seen them, you know. Jane will be sure to ask you if you saw the Art Museum. She has a piece of fancy work in it. You can take my word for it, it's lovely. And father will ask you if you saw the new Masonic temple and what you thought of the mahogany pulpit. Mother will want to know if you liked the soldier's monument the Woman's Society donated to the public square. So now you can't say you're not warned. Anyhow, the dam was worth it, wasn't it?"

"Indeed it was."

They passed the flour mills, the sash and door factory, then they turned into Market Street. Uncle Alfred felt in his pockets. "I don't believe it would pay to go home empty handed. There's Dick. He's got a sweet tooth. Guess I had better stock up again." He paused in front of a grocery store. "A little candy and peanuts," he suggested. "I don't have the privilege of winning this sort of favor every day." Marjorie waited for him outside.

A few dejected and helpless hens panted in a crate by the door. Marjorie leaned over them commiseratingly.

"Oh, you poor things!" she lamented. "You're wretched, I know you are, and there isn't but one end to it. Oh, it must be *dreadful* to languish in that *horrible* crate awaiting your doom. If there was a thing I could do; but there isn't as I see. You're hot, and you're hungry, and you're choking beforehand, to say nothing of the anxiety you are enduring, not knowing which will go first. It seems to me if they're bound to kill you they might make your last hours as comfortable as possible. The idea of sticking you right out here in this red-hot sun! I suppose they want you to advertise yourselves,—as though it was a very pleasant thing to encourage your own latter end. I'd bring a drop of water to cool your parched tongues if—"

Marjorie looked anxiously up and down the alley. Oh, there was! An empty tin can! She ran for it. "I'll be back in a minute," she promised, bending pityingly to peer in upon the four unhappy victims. The hydrant was a half a block away. She hurried from it, splashing water all over her dress front, in her earnestness to relieve suffering. "Oh, you poor forlorn creatures! Well, anyhow, this will help some."

Inside she could hear Uncle Alfred talking to the groceryman. She tried all the slats for a loose one, but there was none. In desperation she grabbed up a stick and pried one off boldly. Then she stooped to pick up the can. There was an excited flop, a triumphant squawk, and Marjorie caught a flutter of gray dominique feathers over her head. She made a grab for it but while she did so it was repeated, once, twice. Three old hens had a new lease of life and liberty.

They sped along the street with loud and excited squawks, pursued by Marjorie. Through an alley, in behind the dye works, out again into the street, on they went. Marjorie's hat blew out behind to the full length of its rubber band. Her hair escaped finally from Jane's fine pink bows, and tossed out in riotous freedom.

Uncle Alfred came out to the door in time to catch a glimpse of speeding pink chambray, and, not knowing what the trouble was, took after it. Around the livery barn, through some one's clothes yard, under the bake-shop steps. The portly baker in his white apron, very red in the face at being disturbed, came to the door to see what the trouble was, and shook his fist at the little tan dog that ran between his feet, barking wildly. On and on, past the blacksmith shop, past the laundry, past the soap works, on through Chestnut Street into the avenue.

Fine ladies came to their doors astonished to see a little girl, red and breathless, panting along, followed by a dignified old man with white whiskers and flying black cravat. Once she almost had them cornered in a lovely summerhouse but they tore through the vines and got away. Through somebody's bed of choice lilies, over a lovely lawn, on out where the houses grew scarce and where there were fewer people to watch their flight.

At last the tired hens flew into a friendly barnyard, where a dozen or more other fowls set up a wild chorus of welcome. Marjorie sank gasping and perspiring on a rock by the roadside. It was a dear little white house with green blinds and posies in the dooryard. There was a barn—a red one—and a little granary at one side, bulging with yellow corn. Uncle Alfred came up and regarded her anxiously.

"What was it child? What ails you? What were you after?" For answer Marjorie pointed to the three hens, now flown to the top of the hayrack and viewing their surroundings with evident satisfaction.

"I was so afraid somebody would c-catch them," she panted. "If they had, they would have taken them back to that horrid man. I—I didn't know where I was driving them to, but I was bound to keep on till they were safe, anyway. It's a lovely place, isn't it?" She pointed to the tiny farmhouse. "They'll be happy here for a while longer. Think how terrible to be shut in a crate awaiting your doom!" Her hand crept into Uncle Alfred's as she told the story. "I don't suppose these people will mind having three hens more, do you? And it must be a terrible relief to the hens. Supposing you were shut in a box waiting for some one to take a notion to you, without a thing in the world to eat or drink either, and knew that it was only a question of hours till your head would be put on a horrid block or maybe wrung! Wouldn't you be glad to get to a lovely, lovely place like this? Are hens worth so very, very much, Uncle Alfred?" She questioned seriously.

"Oh, I don't know! About thirty cents, I guess."

"And three hens at thirty cents would be ninety cents. Can you lend me ninety cents, Uncle Alfred? I suppose the groceryman has to be considered."

"Yes, I suppose so, seeing he has the first right."

"I don't know whether he has or not. It seems to me the hens ought to have; but I'll settle with him. I'll have some money Christmas, anyhow. Do you think you could trust me for ninety cents till Christmas? Hear them cackle? Aren't they glad? Isn't it worth it? Think, Uncle Alfred, all that happiness for only ninety cents!"

"It certainly does seem like a good bargain, doesn't it?" Uncle Alfred smiled encouragingly into the eager, happy face.

"You know you spoke about a ring." She grew serious again. "Would a ring cost ninety cents?"

"Yes, I guess it would cost more than that."

"Then please buy the hens for me, I'd much rather have them than a ring. And how much more do you s'pose it would cost, Uncle Alfred, as—as much as thirty cents?"

"I shouldn't much wonder if it would," he reckoned meditatively. "Why?"

"Oh, Uncle Alfred! because there's another one. One lone hen that didn't get away—and if I hadn't put the slat back she might have escaped, too. That thought will haunt me all the days of my life. Think of the awfulness of being one lone hen! No chance of its being the other fellow. If anybody comes thinking pot-pie, why she'll have to be in it, that's all there is of it. Just one poor, dejected hen in a crate! Think of it, Uncle Alfred! Think of it! Do you suppose I will ever be able to sleep another wink as long as I live—ever? If you're sure the ring will cost as much as thirty cents over—oh, if I could only have her, too, I should be perfectly, perfectly happy! She might lay eggs, too, mightn't she? Hens usually do. Oh, it would be perfectly lovely to have a hen that laid eggs. It would be such a help to mother," she added to her argument. Her cheek was against Uncle Alfred's sleeve. Her hand tightened around one of his big, strong fingers. He gathered it in tenderly.

"Supposing we buy the ring and the hens, too!" he said softly. "And hadn't we better hurry? The groceryman may have gone for the sheriff or—or some one may have taken a notion to her. Let us fly to the rescue."

"Good-bye, old hens. I hope you will be very happy," Marjorie called over her shoulder as they ran.

"Such a fuss about von chicken." The groceryman laughed as he stood in the door and watched them bearing the rescued hen away. "She was nothing but an ol' hen—tough—tough." He jingled a handful of silver satisfiedly. "What vas hens made for if not to eat, I like to know?" he questioned blankly. "She vas von queer little girl. She vas that—von queer little girl sure." He went to his counters with a puzzled face.

CHAPTER V

PREPARING FOR THE BAZAAR

"If I couldn't do a thing right I'd save my breath to cool my porridge."

"There! I've gone and done it!" Marjorie got up from the sewing-room floor, scattering scraps of cotton and wool in a gay-colored storm. "Both sleeves for one arm, and not another scrap of cloth! No, there isn't any use of looking at it. It's done and that's all there is of it. Give it here, Jane Ann Moxie! Leave me alone! Don't I know it's ruined? Yes, it is pieces of mother's silk dress. Now, I suppose you feel better, Miss Pick and Pry. She gave 'em to me her own self, so I guess you don't need to say anything."

"She might have known you'd waste them!" Jane retorted bitterly. "I needed them to finish my quilt."

"You need everything for something. I don't see why you don't take the whole rag bag and done with it. I would if I were you. And as for wasting things, I don't waste any more'n you do, so there, if you are so smart! Didn't you spoil the candy and waste a whole cup of sugar just yesterday, and didn't you waste all mother's black saxony trying to crochet Dick a muffler that wouldn't go around within a mile? Did

I ever waste so much in all my life, Jane Ann Moxie? Answer me that! You know I didn't. But the least little thing I do is a terrible suz. Just as if everybody didn't make mistakes."

Marjorie turned the garment over and over anxiously. "There doesn't seem to be any way out of it," she remarked glumly. Things were indeed hopeless when Marjorie could not find a way out. "I suppose I might make elbow sleeves, though they will be terribly unbecoming. Something seems to ail her."

She grabbed up the particular doll in question. "She looks as though she had the smallpox. I suppose we might call it freckles, though it seems to me pink freckles are rather unique. Perhaps she is broke out with the heat; in that case elbow sleeves will be cool. Did you ever see such skinny arms? They are positively weazened. Full sleeves might have covered that up. Never hope, my dear, that any one will write sonnets to your dimpled elbows. If all other aspirations of life fail you, you can perhaps earn a respectable living posing for the Cuticura Soap Company.

"Did you ever hear of green sleeves in a blue dress, Jane? This green matches the polka dots." She held up a scrap to get the effect. "It's bound to look a fright. I don't know as it matters much. This horrid old needle hasn't got any point anyhow. I'd like to know who could do anything with a needle like that!" She broke the tangled thread from it impatiently.

"Jane Moxie, you've got the only decent needle there is."

Jane had gone quietly back to the sofa and resumed the making of pincushions.

"This is the one I've had all the week. I always keep my needle in the case where it belongs. You'd save time and temper, Marjorie, if you were a little more particular where you put your needle."

Marjorie rummaged excitedly through the machine drawer. "I thought 'twas in mother's workbox, but 'tisn't and 'tisn't here. It isn't anywhere as I see. Jane Ann Moxie, if you *know* where 'tis why don't you say so? I'd like to see you sew with a needle without any point."

"You might look in mother's splint basket," said Jane. "She had that down to the sewing circle yesterday. She might have taken the needles with her."

Marjorie continued to rummage till she dug them out, leaving the basket upset beneath the sewing table. "Yesterday one front of the Japanese doll's kimono was wrong side out, and to-day it's a sleeve. I'd like to know what it'll be to-morrow! Probably I'll get the sailor boy's breeches legs mixed up with my leg-o'-mutton sleeve pattern. I'm bound to cut some dido. I don't see why I didn't take pincushions or something easy—I always have the hardest things to do."

"You had your choice, though," remarked Jane with dignified calm. "You know Belinda Barks wanted the dolls."

"Yes, but Belinda *can't* dress dolls. You know she can't. They would have looked like a fright. You *know* I have to do it for all the girls. Didn't she come over here just the other day for me to fix her gathers? There wasn't another one could have done dolls fit for a bazaar."

"Oh, I don't know—perhaps—if the rag bag held out." Jane could not resist the temptation for so fine a bit of sarcasm.

"Oh, you don't need to preach, Missy; you got one side of your plush heart cushion wrong side out and I've got the half you threw away. I'm going to make my winter doll a tam out of it." Marjorie dug it out tauntingly. "As long as I did things myself I wouldn't talk to other folks." She gathered her scraps together excitedly. "It isn't as if I looked for any sympathy from you; I didn't. Just as if it wasn't enough to be always getting something wrong and having to do things over without being preached at and having to see how awfully good some one else is. I don't care!" Marjorie was on the verge of tears. "If you *know* of any way I should think you might tell."

"Why don't you make a new dress for her and take that for one of the others? I am always willing to help when my services are appreciated. I thought you wanted me to leave you alone?" Jane laid down her cushion and Marjorie lifted her face from the rag bag hopefully.

"I know where there's a few scraps of pretty blue muslin like I made that dresser scarf of last spring. You might have those."

"Oh, might I, Jane?" Marjorie was on her feet in a moment and had her arms around her sister. "You're such a dear, and your pincushions are lovely, I *do* wish I could do something like that; but of course I never shall. I shall always have to do silly, childish things like dolls, and shall always botch them and get them wrong. Oh, whatever do you think ails me, Jane? Do you think I could be fixed? If I live, say to be as old as Methuselah, do you think I will outgrow any of it? I should like to be nice and patient and sensible, but I suppose two in a family would be asking too much. When I watch you picking out knots it seems almost like a—a miracle. I know then that I shall never, never be like you. When I get a knot in my thread something inside me seems to fly in pieces. My thread is always knotting, but I never yet have picked one out. Do you ever feel things break inside you, Jane?

"I'll make the blue muslin with a beautiful shirred yoke and a skirt to match, and trim it with this little edging I ripped off of my dimity apron. It wasn't any good anyhow, for I had torn the bertha most off and the apron part was all stained with berries. Oh, you are so good, Jane, to give up the blue muslin when you might have made it into a quilt or something, mightn't you? And I'll never, never tell a word about the plush heart,—not to a soul,—cross my heart and hope to die,—and do you mind if I have it to make a plush tam of, it's such a pretty red and will make a beauty? I don't care, I'm glad I didn't let Belinda Barks have 'em. Isn't the little Japanese doll a treasure, if part of her kimono *is* wrong side out? You wouldn't notice it now a little ways off, would you?—and the lovely twist I got on her hair more than makes up for it.

"That little golden-haired one over there is going to be a bride, and I have the scraps of mother's net curtains to make a veil. Jane, do you think mother would care if I cut up my brown leggings to make that dear little black-haired doll an Indian skirt, fringed all round? I have a piece of father's old felt hat to make her a sombrero, and I ripped the Indian beads off my old moccasin slippers. I mean to braid her hair in two long braids and let them hang down over her shoulders.

"At the bazaar I am going to be an Italian girl, dressed in red and green with a striped scarf tied round my head, and I have ten different strings of beads gathered up already, blue ones and yellow ones, and a lovely red string that Hattie Mintey lent me.

I'm going to wear them round my neck and on my arms and every place, and mother has promised me her ruby bracelets. I shall sell fruit and tissue-paper flowers. Nellie Coot is making the flowers. Do you think I ought to stain my face and hands, Jane? I can paint my cheeks and lips with squawberry juice. Dick and I know where plenty of it grows down by the river."

"But I wouldn't," admonished Jane. "It might poison you; besides, it wouldn't be proper."

"But it would be natural. You know yourself the Italians are high colored. I would rather look natural than to be proper. If I set out to be a thing I'll *be* it, I don't care if it does take paint and putty. If I couldn't do a thing right, Jane Moxie, I'd save my breath to cool my porridge. Do you s'pose if I knew it wasn't right myself I could make other folks believe it was? In order to pretend anything you've got to just as good as *be* it. I don't like things that a body has to look up in the catalog before they know what it means."

"I shall be dressed as a Puritan maid and wear mother's gray challie, with a white silk fichu folded about my neck. I think it will be very becoming," Jane remarked.

"And a little white turned-back cap, and carry a Bible just like the picture in our old Barnes History," finished Marjorie. "—And oh, Jane! carry Grandmother Knight's old-fashioned brocaded reticule, and wear those dear linen cuffs in mother's celluloid box —yes, and mother's embroidered apron that Aunt Grace gave her! *Do,* Jane! You are going to sell Bibles, aren't you—and those queer little ear muffs Lucinda Mugg makes? You will carry your knitting in your reticule and when trade is dull you can knit. That will be living up to the part. It doesn't matter what part one has as long as one does it well.

"I mean to sew little bells to my sleeves and carry Dick's tambourine. My booth is going to be all decorated in red and green tissue-paper garlands and paper lanterns, and I shall say, 'banano, banano, twenty cent a dozena,' every time any one comes past. I will pass my tambourine out for the change, wouldn't you, Jane? Oh, I wish I had an old hand organ and a monkey. Wouldn't that be fine? The monkey could sit on the counter and pass his red cap and when trade was dull I could turn the crank. Oh, I *do* wish I had a hand organ and a monkey."

In the excitement of so new and striking an idea Marjorie got up and stepped on the India-rubber doll, that was waiting her tea-matting petticoat and hat and one of Jane's battenberg rings in her poor little rubber nose to transform her into a Hawaiian princess. She emitted a gasping squawk; but Marjorie, standing in the middle of the floor clapping her hands and gesticulating wildly, neither saw nor heard. It was such a very novel and unexpected idea.

Suddenly she became still, her ears pricked into keenest activity. A faint melody seemed permeating the air. It came through the open window. Marjorie ran and pushed away the white curtain and leaned far out. A long ways off—several blocks, perhaps—it *was*—surely. Gradually the melody evolved itself into a tune. Marjorie crossed the room in three bounds and literally fell down stairs. It was as though unseen powers had provided an answer to her unvoiced petition. At the bottom she encountered Dick. Her jumbled exclamations expressed nothing to his unsuspecting intelligence.

She grabbed a hat off the hall rack and ran madly with it in her hand, her hair streaming wildly in her wake. One corner, two corners, and at the third she spied them—a man, a little black smiling man, an ideal Dago man in baggy clothes and old slouch hat, a red bandana knotted under his chin—and a monkey, whining and making faces and turning somersaults on the hard board walk. Yes, and he wore a jacket and red cap just as Marjorie had hoped that he would. Never was there a cuter, dearer little monkey, or a nicer, more genuine old Dago man. Marjorie could have embraced them in her rapture. She joined them, panting and out of breath. They were just finishing up "Annie Rooney," and the children were loud in their applause. Marjorie pushed into their midst. She even got hold of the Dago's sleeve.

"Oh, Mister, I want to borrow your organ and the monkey," she entreated, pulling at her hat that the wind had nearly torn away. "It's a perfectly dear old organ and wheezes beautifully. Oh, I was just wanting one when I heard you. Isn't it funny that I was just wanting one?"

The Italian man did not seem to think that it was funny. Her hold of his sleeve when he was just beginning on "The Good Old Summer Time" was annoying. He shook his arm to be free of her. He shook his head also; but Marjorie persisted.

"Oh, it's just for a night, for the bazaar, you know. I'm to be an Italian girl. I have a tambourine. My booth will be the very prettiest, all strung with tissue paper and lanterns, and I've got beads and everything—if I only had a monkey and an organ. He's a perfectly delicious monkey. His little coat and cap are so dirty and interesting. Oh, can't I have him just for a night? I'll be good to him. I'll feed him crackerjack and peanuts and—and everything. Oh, do say yes!" But the Italian man showed a mouthful of white teeth without seeming to smile much, and jabbered off a lingo that Marjorie could not understand. He had gotten his sleeve loose and was moving away up the street. But Marjorie pursued him relentlessly.

"You know I don't want him to keep. I only want him for a night, and do you suppose I'd hurt a hair of his dear little head?—and if it's the organ you're afraid of, I'll promise not to grind out a single tune if you don't want me to, no matter how dull trade gets, if you'll only let it set on my counter. I'm going to wear a green skirt and the dearest old red jersey that was mother's, and I've got ten strings of beads to wear round my neck." She was panting along beside him, trying to keep step, and once more she reached up impulsively and caught his sleeve. The little monkey, perched high on his master's shoulder, chattered crossly.

"Betta go home, little girl," the Italian man said, not unkindly, in words that Marjorie understood.

"But I'm not going home, not till you promise." She stamped her foot vehemently over her inability to impress the Italian. "I am the only one who is to represent the Italian people. You ought to be proud to have them represented right. You wouldn't want to be there and just see that the Italians didn't amount to anything, would you? Of course, if I didn't just *slave* they wouldn't. Would a dummy just standing up selling fruit and flowers represent the Italians? No, of course it wouldn't—and I've worked and made flags and strung beads, and made brown paper lighters to look like macaroni. If I hadn't cared, would I have done that, say? And you don't care enough about being represented to lend your old organ and monkey. I wish I was to be a Japanese or an Indian or a Fiji Islander—anything but an Italian. I didn't know they were such a—a stubborn race. Oh! say, Mister, *why* won't you let me take it?" She caught him by both hands now and hung on. "If it's money you want—" A happy thought struck her. "—I'll pass the hat every time I grind a tune, or the monkey shall do it for me, and I'll save all the money for you. I shouldn't wonder if there'd be five dollars. Just think of it—five dollars for lending your old organ!"

At last she had him interested. He looked at her quizzically with his sharp little eyes. "Whena you wanta?" he asked. He listened in seeming stupidity to the deluge of explanations and details she thrust upon him—and how the money was to go to pay the minister, and how the minister had a baby that had fallen in the fire and maybe would never be able to walk again; and when she was through he only showed his teeth again and said: "Betta go home, little girl," loosening the fingers that clung to his sleeve.

He was turning in at a little rickety gate that led to a rickety house, at the end of a rickety walk, and Marjorie dared not follow. She sat down on a hitching block miserably. She was breathless and dusty and miles from home, and it was of no use. She wasn't going to have any organ or any monkey. He was a mean, mean, mean old Dago man, and she didn't see why she hadn't chosen to be a greasy Laplander or a pig-eyed Chinaman and done with it!

She was squelched into a little hopeless heap when Dick found her. He had hunted all over and Mother Moxie had worried; dinner was ready, and father was home. He looked stern, too. Together they ran all the way back.

CHAPTER VI

A REALISTIC MAKE-BELIEVE

"You never know what's hidden down under the crust."

The hall was certainly a spectacle, when the eventful night of the bazaar came round. Great folds of bunting had been gathered in the center and streamed out in knots above the windows—red, white, and blue. The chandeliers were massed with garlands and streamers of every hue. The booths themselves were like so many glittering store fronts—brilliant with swinging lanterns and framed with boughs of fragrant cedar and hemlock. Just to the right of the door stood the Indian tepee, the flaps tied back to disclose an old squaw squatting among her wares—odd little baskets and bead work, curious shells marked "souvenir," and all sorts of burnt leather goods, some of them colored in truly Indian fashion, the crowning triumph, a rack of peace pipes decorated each with an enormous pompon to which half the roosters in Northrum had donated a feather.

Next came the smiling Japanese lady under her swinging parasols, showing a mouthful of pearly teeth every time you stopped to admire her wares, peeping slyly into the bit of a mirror behind her booth, every time you weren't looking, to arrange her yellow flowered kimono or tuck the rose into her high coiffure. She would show you her dainty embroideries with the coyest air, tilting her bird-like head to one side and hiding behind her painted fan, or she would sell you a raffia mat or a sweet-grass box, and she had the dearest little kimono sacks that went like hot cakes. If you were thirsty she would steep you a cup of fragrant tea in her love of a teapot, swinging over its mite of a blue flame. You passed on reluctantly to the little Dutch *fraulein* in her wooden shoes and short bodice, her plaited yellow hair hanging down from her blue Dutch bonnet, and her heavy linsey petticoat tucked up on her hips. She was displaying proudly a stack of good substantial gingham aprons and sensible socks and wrist bands—dear little stocking caps too, crocheted of bright-colored Germantown zephyrs. A platter of plump little patties of Dutch cheese sat temptingly near, and a platter of steaming frankfurters, either of which you might buy two for a nickel, and you might sit on the three-legged stool before her booth and eat them.

Puritan Priscilla, meek in her gray gown, rose from her spinning wheel to show you her hemstitched kerchiefs and the dear little book markers each with an appropriate quotation of Scripture done in silk, or to sell you a turkey-wing duster, souvenir of that first Thanksgiving. She had good linen crash towels for sale, each finished with a little brass ring in the corner to hang them up, and handmade pillow slips and fine linen aprons, and she would sell you, if you wished, a delicious drink of cool milk out of the dearest of old blue mugs.

You laughed when you came to the queer little Jew, bent over with his burden of shoestrings and innumerable small stuff—needles and pins, cheap jewelry, and lead pencils. His shrill little cry of "Sheep, sheep! Sella you sheep," turned the crowd in his direction, and fattened his small pockets with nickels and dimes. Now and then he set down the crate to hitch up Father Moxie's striped cassimere trousers that were many times rolled over at the bottom and still too large, or to adjust the flat little derby that seemed about to swallow him up entirely. This he did by balancing it upon his ears, a process that bent him double with responsibility. A faded old clay-worsted swallowtail, and an old-fashioned celluloid collar and flaming red tie completed his outfit, and created the Jew.

A sweet-faced nurse girl in blue striped gingham and white cap, with prim white cuffs turned back from her wrists, had charge of all the dolls, and some of them were tucked in downy beds, and had to be taken up and dressed before they could go with their new mammas. Their little white nighties were done up in tiny parcels to be carried away with them. Some were already waiting in full street costume, gorgeously gowned in the latest fads of fashion, some in eiderdown opera capes resplendent with furbelows, some in full décolleté ready for a ball. One very dainty miss in blue muslin and lace, swung leisurely in a miniature hammock suspended between the booth props.

The Japanese doll stretched at ease upon a tiny raffia mat, slyly concealing any deficiencies in the cut of her kimono. The soldier boy posed jauntily on the deck of a paper ship, a coil of rope swung over his arm. The Spanish señorita peeped shyly over her crepe-paper fan, as she sat on an imaginary piazza in her lace mantilla and flirted with passers-by. The Hawaiian princess in her tea-matting petticoat stood boldly up and faced the crowd with a serpent tattooed upon her rubber breast. The patient little nurse girl brought them all out and showed them off upon request, and wound up their springs when they run down, and pinched those that only talked upon protest, and explained the virtues of their various sorts of joints, ball and socket or plain hinge, the desirability of soft heads or hard heads, and the luxury of "real hair."

Next you came to the squat little negro cabin with its make-believe fireplace in the rear where a black pot swung suspended from crossed sticks and where bits of red tissue paper with a lamp behind them looked for all the world like red fire. Mammy Chloe in her polka-dot calico with a red bandana turban knotted over her head, her face every bit as black as the pot, puttered about, bringing you out her queer little yarn lamp mats and holders, and the gorgeous paper throws that she explained were to put over your pictures or maybe over your dresser. The little cabin was dim and she showed you about with a sputtering tallow candle that she stopped every little while to "snuff." If you could stay long enough she would tell you a story of "ha'nts" or of queer "happenin's" that occurred long ago. Over on the little red-clothed stand in the corner was a platter of delicious parched corn crisps and a pot of honey that she urged all of her customers to sample.

A youthful bootblack had set up business on the corner and his cheerful call of "Shine, Mister?" detained many a passer-by.

And at the end of the long row the Italian people were being represented. Everything bright and decorative had been pressed into the service—Mother Moxie's china vases flaunting great bouquets of paper roses, a great many dear little plaster images that Marjorie had collected from her friends, and in the center a picture of the Madonna, draped with one of Mammy Chloe's most gorgeous scarfs, and topped by a huge cross of paper carnations. Festoons and streamers and garlands hung from the ceiling and draped the walls. Baskets of flowers sat on the counter, lilies and pansies and enormous bunches of carnations and roses tied with ribbon, awaiting buyers. All along in front, the counter was spread with fruit, piles of deliciously ripe bananas, apples polished into rubies, yellow oranges tempting the nostrils with a delicious odor, and Mother Moxie's crystal fruit dish full of salted peanuts.

In the midst stood Marjorie, radiant with Father Moxie's Turkish neck scarf round her head, her brown hair falling in a shower from under it, her sunburned skin showing a rich olive in its gaudy setting. Neither cheek nor lips needed the red juice of the wild squawberry vine to make them glow crimson under the giddy dancing lanterns. Dick's tambourine was tied to her waist with a knot of silken cord. Big brass rings were pinched stingingly into her ears, but she did not mind. She was carried away with the exaltation of the moment. Now and then she lifted the tambourine and beat her elbows and knuckles and forehead with a jingling tune. The little bells on her sleeves chimed in merrily and Mother Moxie's bracelets flashed their rubies in sparkling crimson, and how the ten strings of beads did glisten and glow with color! Her slim brown fingers were loaded with cheap rings and the whole front of the red jersey was decorated with badges and medals and odd showy buttons, yes, and the biggest, reddest red rose with a grass-green calyx and stem.

People crowded around at Marjorie's clarion call of "Banano, banano, twenta cent a doz!" Her red lips parted in a beaming smile for each and every customer. She had not been able to secure the hand organ and monkey, but she had tramped to Upper Northrum to borrow old Mrs. Gilbert's parrot. He sat now, huddled wisely on his perch over Marjorie's head, blinking his eyes mysteriously at the bobbing red lanterns. Sometimes he got up anxiously and hopped the length of his cage, calling out a gutteral disapproval.

When trade became dull Marjorie held out a queer little red heart box with the invitation to dip into its mysteries. "Only five cents for your fortune, Mister! Come take one and find out if you are to marry a rich lady! All anxieties of the future settled here for five cents! Why pine an old maid when five cents will get you a rich husband? Dukes, lords, and millionaires all for five cents! Take one and go home happy! A fortune for five cents! Who will buy? Who will buy?"

The swinging lanterns cast dizzy red and green reflections into the girl's glowing, upturned face, and each gaudy ornament turned into a glistening gem. Already the crowd was loaded with fruit and flowers but her ringing voice brought them back, "Banano, oh, banano! Who will buy banano? Twenty cent a doz! Banano!" The intoxication of success sent the blood pounding into her throat. Oh, if she only could have had the deliciously dear little monkey and the wheezy old organ! and even as the thought came she looked and they were there, the little black Dago man showing his teeth, and the monkey pulling his grimy cap and grinning over the counter. Marjorie had the door open in a moment and was fairly dragging them inside.

"Oh, you *did* come, you *did,* and you're just the finishing touch!" Marjorie stood off to survey them. "He's just the dearest, dirtiest, little monkey, and oh, I'm so glad—glad—glad!" She cleared a place for the organ and the black little man stood and played his tunes over and over again, beginning with "Annie Rooney" and on down to "Home Sweet Home."

The crowd thickened as if by magic. Little children clinging to older hands tugged madly to be nearer. Childish hands and feet clapped their enthusiasm. Marjorie sold fruit and dispensed fortunes and smiled beamingly, sometimes joining in with the tambourine, till the little booth seemed well nigh stripped of its treasures, and the brown cigar box under the counter was heavy with spoils.

There was no question now about the Italian's smiling when he showed his teeth. His beady black eyes twinkled with delight. The jaunty monkey pranced along the counter passing his master's hat, and when it grew too heavy for his little hands the Dago man emptied the contents into his own pockets. A good many times it had to be emptied before the evening was over, and each time the smile grew broader and deeper.

At last the people were going home. The wheezy old organ had grown choked and spasmodic and the little children had gone to sleep listening to its jingling tunes and would have to be carried home. Mother and Father Moxie had come for Marjorie, and the little old Dago man had shut up his box and taken the monkey on his shoulder. He looked wistfully about the gaudy booth and then at Marjorie.

"Homeseek," he explained, drawing a grimy sleeve across his face. "Far away is ze land, you know—bright, always bright! Blue sky and all over ze green and ze flowers. You know." He sought their faces hungrily. "Oh, no," he shook his head. "So far away."

He turned to Marjorie's mother, "She mek believe Italian ver' good. I have a little girl at home same—bright face, bright hair—so. Ze bead—" he reached and touched some at Marjorie's throat—"same like she wore—blue. I carry some on my heart—so. Long, long year I carry him—me. Till one day him stole. Now me have not'ing. It make me weep. Come, Pipo!" He reached up and stroked the monkey.

"Now we go again into foreign land." At the booth door he turned. "I forget me." He reached into his pockets and drew out all the clinking coins, heaping them into Marjorie's tambourine. "For ze babee, you know, ze little seek babee!" and then he was gone, the little monkey waving his cap in a wistful farewell.

For a moment Marjorie stood stupefied over the sudden acquisition of such wealth and struggling with an unaccountable lump that had been accumulating in her throat, then she threw it all upon the counter impatiently and sped after the disappearing organ grinder, pushing the crowd to right and left and loosening the strings of blue beads as she went.

"Oh, wait, wait," she cried, thrusting herself upon him and hugging his ragged sleeve. "Why DID they steal them! and, oh, *won't* you take these? They won't be the same but maybe you can make believe they are—and if you ever see the little girl"—Marjorie's eyes were overflowing with ready tears—"you can give them to her. Oh, who would be mean enough to steal blue beads that belonged to somebody's little girl?" For a moment the enormity of the crime rendered her speechless. She pressed the blue beads into his hand silently.

"If you would only wear them there—next to your heart, don't you think it would make you feel better? And if there's any of these others that you want"—her hand fumbled all the strings at her throat—"take them! It must be awful to live with nothing but just a monkey, and I called you a mean old Dago man; but you aren't, you're good, and oh, I wish you could go back and see her, don't you?"

"He sat down on the church steps and cried, Mother Moxie—a big, dirty man—yes, he did—cried and wiped it on his sleeve—and I cried, too, and gave him all my beads, and now I shall have to *slave* to pay the girls, but it must be terrible, terrible, to be all alone in a strange land with only a monkey that can't talk, and I shall never, never again call any one mean till I know what's on the inside. You never know what's hidden down under the crust. To think that I might never have known about the little girl or the blue beads, and might have gone right on calling him a mean old Dago man. If he wears them all over his heart it ought to make him feel some better, don't you think so, Mother Moxie?—and hereafter I shall always drop something in the hat when I see an old organ grinder, for if it isn't blue beads it's something else," she concluded with a philosophy wise beyond her years.

CHAPTER VII

SOME OF MARJORIE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

"Whoever said stray cats hadn't a mission in life?"

"Well, what have you got now, Marjorie?" Sister Jane, shaking the dust cloth off the front banisters, faced her sister coming up the steps.

"What have you been up to now, Sis?" Dick raced in from the lawn inquisitively. "Cooning apples?" He made a grab at the lumpy burden wrapped up in Marjorie's apron. Marjorie warded him off savagely. She crowded past them into the house and on through to the back steps. They followed at her heels.

"Oh, mother! It's a baby. I heard it cry," suggested Sister Jane.

"What is it, Marjorie?" Mother Moxie joined the curious crowd at the door.

"Well, if you must all know, it's kittens—an old cat and four kittens, or maybe it's five. I hope so. Is there anything very wonderful about that?" Marjorie turned to face them desperately. "I'm going to take them to the barn and make a nest." She squared herself for a battle.

"Oh, Marjorie. Five cats!" Mother Moxie's tones sank helplessly. "And we already have three. Where did you get them, child?"

"Eight cats, and only last week she found the dog." Sister Jane drew near to enjoy the discussion that was sure to follow.

"Eight cats, and a yellow dog, and a frozen-footed hen, and a canary that can't sing," recounted Dick.

"Well, I don't care! the hen lays eggs just the same," defended Marjorie. "And I couldn't help taking these; you would have done it yourself—so there! Oh, you dear little things!" she said, sitting down on the cistern and undoing the protesting bundle. "Oh, you poor old mother! How your heart must have ached! Only think! They were on the edge of being drowned. A miserable boy had them in a bag. I had a hard tussle but I was victorious. I think I clawed him. Oh, mother, think of being dragged to a watery grave!" Her face was full of the possible tragedy. "Wouldn't I have been a brute to have stood by and watched that horrid boy go on? Wouldn't I, Mother Moxie? Answer me that! Think of being tied in a bag and being drowned!"

"Well, what do you mean to do with them now?" questioned Mother Moxie in a conciliatory tone.

"Do with them? Why, I shall keep them, of course. What do folks usually do with cats and kittens?"

"It costs money to keep five cats," suggested Sister Jane disparagingly.

"Costs! Costs! I wouldn't say such a stingy thing as that, Jane Ann Moxie!" Marjorie returned with scorn. "How much do you suppose these little toothless kittens are going to eat? They can have my cup of milk every morning. I don't care for it anyhow. I guess we can afford to keep one more cat."

"Kittens will grow," remarked Dick dryly.

She cast one withering glance upon him. "I hope they will. Dick Moxie, I believe you'd be mean enough to drown the innocent little things yourself. You look it. Before I'd be a sister to a murderer!" she said, as she did the struggling bundle up and fled for the barn. "I hope I'll never live to desert a helpless family like this." She turned to fire a last missile. "I'd rather go on one crust a day. I'd go in rags first. I wouldn't be so stingy, so mean—so—." A wave of stormy words swept through the barn door.

She found a comfortable box and filled it with straw, and into this she cajoled the suspicious mother and snuggled the four blind kittens. "There, don't you feel better? Isn't that snug? Just make yourself at home. See how soft this straw is, and here's father's old yarn muffler to top it off with. I mean to be very good to you and help you to forget this terrible morning. There'll be my cup of milk to count on, and you can have part of my scraps. I give a few of them to old Crumple-foot and the rest to the Appetite; but you'll come in for your third," she promised, as she patted and coaxed them into a state of confidence. The old cat began to sing, and the kittens left off fretting and set about establishing themselves comfortably.

Marjorie watched the coddling mass with satisfaction. "Oh, you little dears! I'm so glad that I saved you. You will live to be lovely, lovely cats, and never catch any mice, then I shall love you," she advised them. "You must promise never, never to catch dear little birds when you grow up. It's the only thing I have against cats. You know yourself it is wicked and heathenish. If you come in some day with a poor little mangled robin I shall never forgive you —no, not even a little brown sparrow, for a sparrow has feelings just the same, if there is a bounty on its head. Do you hear me, you four blind pussy cats? And if you are ever caught torturing a poor, helpless mouse, listening unmoved to its pitiful squeals, I shall live to wish I had never interfered with your untimely death."

She heard Dick on the ladder. His head appeared through the hole. She drew out the prettiest one of the four and held it up for approval. "Oh, Dick! Isn't it a perfectly lovely darling? See its little white shoes and stockings, and he has a white shirt front, too. Oh, Dick!"

Dick came over carelessly and dropped down by the box. "Well, they are a mixed lot, all right," he remarked condescendingly, as she singled out the plain gray from the black and white, the gray and white, and the yellow and white. "No need of naming them. You'll be able to tell them apart, all right. They're a mongrel lot."

"I have them named already," confided Marjorie. "The old cat is Catastrophe—though, thanks to me, she has avoided it. Just think what a catastrophe it would have been for this poor soul if I had not appeared on the scene in the nick of time! Don't it send a creep up your back, Dick Moxie? Of course it does, and you needn't pretend you don't feel. You're chicken-hearted yourself, and I'm proud of you for it. The old cat is Catastrophe, of course, for this probably hasn't been her first experience. The young ones I have given cheerful names, for, after all, there's a lot in a name. Now, for instance, if I had been given a plain, neat name like Jane, or if you had been called Zedadiah. These kittens were probably born under very distressing circumstances, with depressing surroundings—an old ash barrel, no doubt, or an abandoned coal bin; though, thank goodness, they haven't had eyes so far. Their names must therefore be cheerful to counteract the effect as far as possible upon their young spirits."

"Spirits!" sniffed Dick contemptuously. "Look at the little, squirming things! They're eating their mother up."

"This little black and white one I have named Consolation. That will please its mother. Hasn't it a cute little white tip on its tail? This demure gray one shall be called Merriment, because if anything ever needed a gay name it's this kitten. Think of being all gray, and no way to change it! But I suppose its eyes will break up the monotony when they come, if they ever do. This yellow and white shall be Nugget of Gold, which will insure its worth. I think Nugget of Gold is a very fine name, don't you, Dick? I should like a horse by that name."

"Why not Goldie or Goldenhair?" suggested Dick, thoughtfully.

"Well, Goldie is pretty and so is Goldenhair," agreed Marjorie, anxious to be considerate of Dick's opinions, "but you see I couldn't have that name—supposing it should turn out to be a boy. You have to think of those things. You see it is a very particular job naming young kittens. Now, I would have named this little gray and white one Dottie Dimple if the gender wasn't so uncertain. It's much safer to choose neuter where one don't exactly know. So I have chosen the name of Frolic, and I hope he will live up to it."

"They're a mess of little beasts," Dick declared, as he watched them rooting hungrily for the best place. "I can't see anything pretty in kittens till they're blossomed out more than these," he said scornfully. "I'll reserve my criticism till they're feathered out a little at least. Come on down, Sis, and quit snuzzling those cats. I'm fixing my stilts for a race with you, Miss." He slid down through the hole with agility, and Marjorie with a few final pats slid down behind him; but she shook her head sadly over the stilts.

"No more play for me, Dick. I'm going at my garden this morning," she said, as she took down her hoe decisively. "Do you think it's too late to save it, Dick?" she asked, as they went over the rows of tomatoes and cabbages together. "I never meant to leave it till it looked like this. How am I going to tell which are onions and which are weeds? It looks measly, doesn't it? Do you suppose it'll ever come on like Jane's? Don't you actually believe, Dick, that there's something the matter with this corner of the lot? It don't seem to raise good garden. Look at Jane's peas over there! They're as green as Ireland. What do you s'pose is the reason? I wish I'd chosen peas instead of onions. You have to get down on your knees to onions."

"Well, that won't be bad practice for you, Sis," Dick declared irreverently.

Marjorie hoed with enthusiasm, but seemed to make small progress. She made trips to and from the well with the watering pot. "I'll save them if they are not too far gone," she said. "I guess twenty-five heads of cabbage and twenty-five tomato plants and two rows of onions will help out some with the family." She leaned on her hoe and sighed. "I know how to pity father now," she said. "A family is a great responsibility, and no mistake. But they're worth it. They're a darling lot. Such a cute white spot on Consolation's tail!"

She came in at noon, red from exertion and a muddy spot under each knee. "There! No one can say I've thrown the burden of the increase on father," she said, throwing herself on the ottoman, and getting mother's hand screen to fan herself. "Whew! but it's hot! Well, I'm glad it's done, anyhow, if it did take almost a tragedy to get me started. Goodness, but those cabbage plants did look grateful! And the onion family are having a reunion, now that they are once more able to find one another. They've grown long and spindling trying to look over the weeds. My, but I bet the poor things suffered! I made your little snively row of peas look sick, Jane Ann Moxie."

"It's to be hoped your enthusiasm will continue," returned Sister Jane suggestively.

"And Dick, too," went on Marjorie, pointing through the open door. "He's digging away for dear life at his potatoes. Whoever said stray cats hadn't a mission in life," she said, as she slipped a juicy piece of cold roast beef off the platter set out for the midday meal, and tucked it away for Mother Catastrophe.

Father Moxie gave a whistle of surprise when he came in sight of the yard. "Well, that looks something like it," he said. "I guess somebody's getting ambitious around our place."

"And it's high time," put in Marjorie. "If you had the Appetite to look out for—"

"What could you expect of a yellow dog?" accused Dick. "Just an appetite with hair on it."

"It is awful," confessed Marjorie. "I never knew a dog held so much. I wonder if a yellow dog holds more than any other color! I try to keep him as full as I can," she sighed.

"If you had scoured the country to satisfy the Appetite," she continued to Father Moxie, "and suddenly found yourself with a very lean new cat and four very lean kittens on your hands, wouldn't you think it was about time something was done? I'm willing to work, though," she agreed, "and you can't deny that it's a blessing for the garden." She scrutinized Father Moxie keenly through the screen to see how he was taking the news. No special disturbance seemed to agitate his mind. Marjorie took hope.

"It seemed to me three cats were a great sufficiency," Jane probed gently, but Father Moxie had taken up the morning paper and the suggestion was lost.

And so Catastrophe and her litter stayed on in her snug quarters and throve visibly. There was, too, a crippled toad under the barn of which neither Dick nor

Jane knew anything; and up in the loft was a wounded grackle that wicked old Web-toes had one morning pounced upon with evil intent; but, thanks to Marjorie, it would soon be able to fly again, and old Web-toes had been severely reprimanded and shut in a box all day. In the crab-apple tree three motherless robins looked to Marjorie for succor; but she was equal to them all.

She always commenced with the Appetite; then when she had gone the rounds, ministering to all her charges, she came back to the Appetite helplessly. Her feeble efforts seemed to make no impression upon the creature's misery. All in vain she made repeated trips to where the howl came from the tool shed, and reasoned with it. "You mustn't cry so. You're driving every one distracted," she begged. "The neighbors will think I'm starving you to death, and you've eaten—you've really eaten everything in the house. Why can't you be satisfied?" But the Appetite only howled the louder.

"I know this is a stuffy old place," she sympathized, "I know that it's a fine day outside, and that there is lovely green grass to roll upon; but you mustn't mind. This isn't a nice place, but it's better than the pound. Isn't that an awful name—the pound? Think of it! And you have my woolly brown coat to lie on, and there's a cushion under it, too; but you mustn't tell. My very own Christmas cushion!"

But gratitude seemed to be lacking in the Appetite. The long, smooth nose went into the air with a prolonged howl.

"Listen!" she begged. "There's a horrid man waiting just around the corner. If I let you out he's apt to get you any minute. Wouldn't you rather stay here in this nice, comfortable shed than have a horrid man sling a great noose over your head and drag you off to the pound? Answer me that! Dog tax is a cruel invention, but you must have patience till I think of a way to earn the three dollars. Three dollars is a great deal. But there! Poor dear! You can't help that, of course. If I was a man I wouldn't have any trouble finding a way to earn you a perfectly beautiful brass dog tag, would I? But we must make the best of it; you here in your little shed, and I out there in the boiling sun, hoeing like mad," she said, with a parting pat. The dog set up a long, doleful protestation that made Marjorie wince. "It's of no use," she said desperately. "You've got to stand it. Do be still. I don't know but I might better have called you Noise than Appetite. I don't know which there's the most of you," she said.

"The Appetite is losing faith in me," she mused helplessly as she went back to her hoeing. "I don't blame her, poor dear, for haven't I promised her every day, and I'm no nearer the solution than I was that awful morning when I snatched her from the cruel clutches of the dog man. Three dollars—" she hoed viciously. And the noise continued, increased in volume, rose to yelps of baffled rage, dwindled down to a despairing wail, and at last was still. Poor Appetite! At last she slept, or at least so Marjorie thought. She crept into the shade of the old cherry tree to think things over.

It was nice to be free from Appetite for a while. She wondered if it would not have been better to have left the poor thing to her fate. There was a chance that she might have escaped after all, and anyhow, she couldn't have been much more miserable if all that she said was true. And where were the three dollars to come from? And then, how she did eat!

"Is the Appetite all right?" asked Father Moxie as he came in to supper that night. "I thought I saw the dog-catcher around the corner," he finished, but Marjorie was half way to the shed, overcome with remorse. Yes, the shed door was open. There were the empty dishes, the meatless bones, the despised bed; but the Appetite was gone. Dick came out. "Father said he saw the dog-catcher on the corner and he was chasing a yellow dog." But Marjorie was half a block away, and the front gate was swinging on its hinges.

It was the Appetite, of course it was. Marjorie never doubted it. And she was to blame. Hadn't she almost wished not an hour ago that she had left the poor creature to her fate, and now she was gone, poor thing, already snatched up by the hateful dog-catcher. She ran along the street calling loudly. She went up and down all the alleys and peered into back yards and dilapidated coal sheds, but she knew it was of no use whatever; still she panted along madly, her undone hair flying loose from the confines of her lopping garden hat, her eyes overflowing with maternal anxiety; but she knew it was all over with the Appetite, unless—unless she could find three dollars for a dog tag; that was just it, and where could she ever hope to find so much in one short night?

She was standing in front of the "Commercial Loan and Trust Building," and her eyes gradually spelled out the signs, while her mind was grappling with mighty responsibilities. "Money to Loan." The words materialized with a sudden flash. Why, of course, here was a place where they had money to lend—that was it—that was what the sign read. She would work, she would pay it back, she would be willing to slave to get the money for the poor Appetite, who was, no doubt, at this very moment languishing in the pound, awaiting the execution of a lawful sentence. A picture of her probable distress rushed over Marjorie's mind, and she dashed impulsively up the steps to confront the smiling men inside.

"It says on the window that you lend money, and if you do I'll take three dollars, please," she explained briefly. Then she went on and told about the Appetite. "She's not a very pretty dog," she finished, "but then, she's not to blame for that, of course, and her feelings are probably just as fine as any dog's; anyhow, I'm going to save her, and if you won't help me, somebody else will. I'll pay it back soon. I'm going to work hard to earn the money. Of course, I'll give you my note," she said, with all earnestness. The men were laughing. Marjorie frowned impatiently. "If you're going to lend it to me I wish you'd hurry up, for the Appetite must be terribly anxious, besides, she hasn't had her supper. If you don't give it to me, I think you'd better go out and take your sign off the window, for it says 'Money to Loan' just as plain as the nose on your face."

She turned around to point out the truth of her statement, and there, coming up the steps, was Father Moxie. He was pale. His face was anxious. A new and terrible conviction almost swept her down. She rushed upon him in her humiliation and dragged him down the steps. "What are you doing here, father?" She sought helplessly for his big hand.

"And what is my daughter doing here?" he questioned gently.

"Oh, father! I had to have the money! The poor Appetite is in the pound! I must save her. Maybe even this minute it is too late. I offered to give my note." Father Moxie patted the hot little hand that had found his.

"Little Hasty Pudding," he called her. "The Appetite is this minute at home, and she has on her neck a fine brass collar and a new license tag. I tried to tell you, but you were in such haste. You mustn't be so impulsive, little daughter," but the eyes bent tenderly above her told Marjorie how he loved her for it. "There are some things," he said, "that you might trust to father. And by the way, how is the Nugget of Gold coming on?" There was the twinkle that Marjorie loved.

"Oh, they are such dears!" she told him. "They have eyes. Oh, father!" She grew serious. A cloud passed over her sunny face. "Tell me one thing, father!" She peered up at him anxiously. "Were you going—did you go to that place to—to—I mean on account of the sign? Father, tell me, can we afford to—to keep the kittens?" It was out at last, and the old-wise little face lifted to Father Moxie's was full of maternal anxiety. "Tell me the truth, father! Was it on account of the sign?"

"You mean to borrow money?" her father corrected. "No, dear, thank God, there is still plenty for us all, and for all the stray dogs and helpless kittens my dear little daughter can gather up," he told her.

"Now I am perfectly happy," said Marjorie.

CHAPTER VIII

STANDING BY FATHER

"It pays to save one's reserve forces for really important things."

In spite of Father Moxie's calm denial, Marjorie watched him anxiously during the days that followed. It seemed that the lines had deepened in his face and once or twice she spoke to him and he did not answer. Looking at him across the supper table she thought she saw his hand tremble as he lifted his cup of tea. It was such a thin hand, with blue veins that showed. She wondered she had never noticed how thin it was before. For the first time in her life she observed what a light eater Father Moxie really was. It was an especially good supper too—French-fried potatoes and cold ham. And she dearly loved French-fried potatoes and didn't see how any one with half an appetite could resist them; as for the cottage custard, pineapple flavored, and covered with lovely cream it took Jane a whole hour to whip, she couldn't get enough of that. She had passed up her plate so many times she was ashamed to look Mother Moxie in the face. But father had scarcely tasted of his and only nibbled at his delicious cup cake that was to go with it. In vain Marjorie passed him the pickles and the dear little tulip bowl of jelly and urged a second biscuit.

She slipped miserably out of her place and went into the sitting room to shake up the cushions in the big Morris rocker and to draw the footstool, and assure herself that Father Moxie's slippers were in easy proximity. If he should be going to be sick, or—supposing after all the Appetite and five kittens had proven the last feather! She reproved herself that she had not kept a bite of her cup cake or even a little scrap of anything to help along. It was hard to remember not to eat things till it was too late. What a monster appetite was anyhow, when all one's very best resolutions could be swept away at sight of a cup cake and a bowl of cottage custard. And she had eaten three biscuits, and ever and ever so many French-fried potatoes, and ham. She sighed heavily as she rummaged among the newspapers for father's spectacles. There were dark circles underneath his eyes, and he looked pale.

When he came in she adjusted the lamp shade solicitously, and placed the little silver ash tray, polished till you could see your face in it, at his right hand; then she went out to see if the paper boy wasn't coming. He always enjoyed reading the news with his evening cigar. The familiar call was more than a block away and she ran to fetch it sooner than wait. Father Moxie thanked her with a wan little smile that almost broke her heart. She sank down helplessly on the footstool and hugged his feet. Oh, he *was* going to be sick—he *was,* or perhaps he was very much "encumbered." Only last night Marjorie had heard him reading aloud about a man who had become "encumbered," and had lost his fine house on Elm Street and all his furniture was to be sold. Perhaps they would lose their house and then there wouldn't be a shelter for anybody, to say nothing of stray dogs and kittens. She wondered where they would go to live in case their house should be sold. Perhaps they would go to Uncle Alfred's. She rather hoped they might if the worst came to the worst, for she felt quite sure that Uncle Alfred would want to keep the hen, and perhaps he would think favorably of the Appetite and Catastrophe with her numerous family. Marjorie felt the weight of her influence with this one doting relative. The robins would be ready to fly in a day or two and so would the purple grackle. The crippled toad she decided she would carry in a small box lined with batting. Toads were such convenient creatures, never making any remarks, and living very economically on flies.

She patted Father Moxie's shoes tenderly, running her fingers all round the stitched-on patches. Father Moxie wearing patched shoes! Yes, she felt quite sure that it was "encumbered" that ailed him. And only last week she had stamped her foot and said things because she couldn't have a white Sunday hat with a bunch of blue forget-me-nots and velvet ribbon. And precious father was trying to shield them all. He even wanted her to have all the stray dogs and cats. Why *his* clothes were actually threadbare and they were terribly shiny along the knees. Painstakingly she smoothed at the wrinkles in his dull gray sock tops. Dear, dear father, whom nobody was half good enough to, slaving for them all.

During the entire evening Marjorie hovered about trying to do something for his comfort. She brought an extra head rest and begged to tie it on his chair, softening a place for his feet with the best pansy sofa cushion. Twice she went to the well for fresh water, bringing him a drink in Mother Moxie's one cut-glass tumbler that was a present from Aunt Grace in the city. When there wasn't another thing in the world she could think of to do, she stood by the head of his chair and smoothed his hair. Never before had she noticed how thin it was over the temples, or how badly it was streaked with gray. Once he folded his paper and tucked it down among the cushions, and reached up and drew her into his lap; but she broke away tempestuously and ran for the kitchen to smother a sob in the towel.

"Queer little chicken," he called her with a tender smile as he resumed his reading. "Little Hasty Pudding!" It was his favorite name for her.

That night when all was still she rose and tiptoed fearfully through the halls till she stood at her father's door. She pressed her feverish cheek against the cold jamb and listened. The sound of regular breathing inside seemed to reassure her. She stood long enough to convince herself that it would keep on indefinitely, then she went back and crept shiveringly in beside Jane to sleep.

In the morning she arose with a determination. Whatever the trouble was she was going to stand by father. She was not going to wait till the crash came, she was going to do it now. There might be a secret, but she had guessed it, and while she might not tell mother, or even hurt him by letting him guess that she knew, still she could stand beside him, ready, and do everything in her power. Whatever else she did, she resolved, she must not let Father Moxie know that she had guessed the true condition of affairs; but let him go on thinking that he had the dread secret all safely buried from them all. It would be the hardest blow of all when he must tell them, and she would help postpone the evil day as long as possible. But in silent ways she would help him. She meant to see he had the very creamiest glass of milk every day for dinner, and she meant to stay in the office one hour every afternoon while he went for a walk. She had heard him wish that he might. It was so glorious and refreshing out of doors and so hot and stuffy in the horrid little office. She began performing this service at once.

"Why, daughter, I don't know as I ought to leave!" Father Moxie hesitated, looking wearily up from a confusion of letters and papers that strewed the desk. "Somebody might come in."

"Well, supposing they do! I guess I can tend to them. If they want to leave an order I can write it down, and if it's something they want to know, they can call again, or I'll tell them you'll ring them up on the 'phone, how's that?"

"Why, I guess it would work all right. It would certainly be a relief to get out in the sun a little while." He stretched his arms in anticipation of such a pleasure. "You're sure you won't have any trouble?"

"I'm equal to anything," Marjorie assured him, as she settled her short flounces into the office chair. "Isn't there something I might do to make it interesting, something to copy or something? I love to do office work. When I get through school I am going to be an office girl, can't I, father?—and learn to typewrite and keep books and everything. I'll buy out Mr. Deering, and then we'll be partners. Won't that be lovely? I shouldn't be a silent partner either, like he is. I'd hate to be silent anything. Let me see! Did you say I might address these envelopes from that list, and stamp them? Oh, won't that be fun! I love to put on stamps. It seems like spending money. Now, have a good time, popsey. Why don't you go to the beech woods? You haven't any idea how lovely it is." If she could only get Father Moxie to go to the beech woods it would be better than medicine; but there was something that kept him away. "A little matter down the street," he told her, "that I must tend to. I don't get any chances to get off. I appreciate your dropping in this way, daughter."

"I'm coming every day," Marjorie assured him. "Well, then, perhaps to-morrow I'll go to the woods," he promised, as he gathered his conspicuous looking documents and put them in his pocket.

"Now a whole hour," Marjorie warned him. "Don't you dare to come back sooner." When he was gone she stacked up the confusion of letters and straightened the desk, dusting it off with her pocket handkerchief. "It's easy to see who I take after," she mused, as she swept a little pile of cigar ashes off into the waste-paper basket. "When I leave my room at sixes and sevens after this I shall blame it all onto father. I never made a worse mess than this in all the days of my life. It's strange that there are any models in the family instead of a wonder that there are not two."

When she had stacked things around to her own satisfaction, she began on the envelopes, dashing them off in a bold boyish hand. They were soon stamped and ready, waiting in an orderly pile. She viewed them proudly. "I may be careless and slouchy about little things—my hair, or hanging up things, or—or shoe buttons; but when it comes to real big things—business affairs—it pays to save one's reserve forces for really important things. I don't think father could have done them better than that, or even Jane." She looked at the clock. Father Moxie had been gone just twenty minutes. Laboriously she drew the great ledgers from under the desk and spread them open, turning the pages fearfully, half expecting to see her father's failure patent in large letters. At least it would do no harm to look them over and so prepare herself for the worst. She sighed at sight of the long columns of close figures. No wonder father was getting gray before his time.

She turned to the first of the year and began to add up the debit column. Expenses—that meant money that father had paid out. She began fearfully. They were such terrible sums,—"Twenty dollars for white poplar poles—two dollars and a half for turpentine—(That was a great deal of turpentine. One got a whole bottle full for a quarter. She did for mother.) —one dollar for glue—(Think of it, a dollar's worth of glue all at one time! What *could* father be doing with such a lot all at once! She was glad she should find nothing about a white Sunday hat with velvet ribbon)—nails, three dollars—oil, ten dollars." She was not half down one single page and she had one hundred dollars already.

The telephone bell rang so she had to break off and lose her place. Some one wanted to know the price of twelve-inch porch columns and Marjorie had to look it up in the catalogue. They were very expensive. She was almost afraid to tell how much for fear the people wouldn't buy. She felt that Father Moxie could ill afford to lose a customer in face of the present impending crisis. It seemed as though it would be best to cut the price just a little teenty bit. She hung excitedly between the book and the phone; but scarcely daring to venture so bold an act she only assured them that if they would call in person they would get the very best figures; there would probably be some reduction. Determined not to lose track of the least chance she insisted upon their name and phone number, and even asked them how many columns they thought of buying. She wrote all the details on a slip of paper and stuck it on the spindle for Father Moxie to consider. One hundred porch columns at fifty cents apiece would help to cover some of that terrible expense column at least. No wonder father was badly "encumbered" if he had to settle for all that. Think of paying out fifty dollars all at once and for nothing but just boards, too! It was an awful price.

She began to doubt Father Moxie's judgment as to values. She wondered if some one was not imposing upon him because he was such a dear good man and liked to help everybody. Money for screws, for files, and all manner of ugly things, not one thing pretty or satisfying that a body could be glad over getting,—rosin, and sandpaper and stain; ever and ever so much for draying. It came about every fourth place and in appalling sums. It seemed as though some of it surely must be unnecessary.

The phone rang again. This time it was a man who wanted Father Moxie to attend to something immediately. He seemed very angry, and when he understood that he was not in the office the receiver was slammed down with a force that almost injured poor Marjorie's ear pans. Once set in motion it seemed that the phone never ceased ringing. So many impatient, disgusted people Marjorie had never listened to before in all her life. People who wanted this or that, or didn't like something and wanted to change it; so many who had little business matters to settle;—the coal man, the oil man, the gas man. It seems that Father Moxie ought to have attended to every one of them long, long ago. Things were indeed in a serious pass. Every one seemed more or less angry and some more so. Marjorie lifted the receiver fearfully.

"Hello, hello! Is this fourteen two? Well, what on earth ails you people! Isn't two weeks long enough to wait? I'm in a hurry for that order. I could have had it done up at the Falcon long before this. If I can't get it by to-morrow I'll countermand the order." In vain Marjorie shouted promises to silence him. He continued mumbling: "A pretty concern! Promised to have it in three days,—more like three months!"

"Hello, hello! Is this Moxie & Deering? Thought you were going to send a man up to talk things over! We can't wait on your motion all summer. Things have wound about to a focus. Got anything better to offer than six per cent?"

Marjorie was obliged to tell them that no one was in the office.

"A great way to do business," he growled. "Lock up office in the middle of the day."

She longed to tell him about the walk, about how pale Father Moxie was growing, and how worried she was, but he shut her off with a bang. Yes, things were indeed winding to a focus, she felt more and more convinced of the fact.

"Hello! Is this Moxie? How will it be about that little bill this afternoon! I'll send a man around to collect. Hate to press you, you know, but we're running a little close ourselves. 'Long about five o'clock, say! All right, good-bye."

Marjorie grew to dread the prophetic ring. It was bound to be something unpleasant.

Then the fat man came crowding through the narrow doorway, filling the little office with his pompousness. He refused the one reception chair, probably because it was much too small, and stood with his arms folded imposingly across his white waistcoat, and glared down at Marjorie, who assured him that her father would be in, in exactly fifteen minutes by the clock.

"As though I could stand around and wait," he grumbled. "I'm tired of excuses. Yesterday he had to see his partner, and to-day he is out. It looks to me like a put-up job."

"If you'll just take a seat," Marjorie persisted, "it would be no time—"

"I thought you said it would be fifteen minutes! Fifteen minutes are nine hundred seconds exactly, young lady," he reproved her sternly. "That's an important thing to learn, the value of seconds. Every one is a valuable link in the golden chain of time. For every one my neighbor robs me of he is a thief, for time is opportunity, and opportunity lost may never come again." His deep gutteral voice seemed to cause the very walls to quake and tremble.

Marjorie experienced a sinking feeling at the pit of her stomach. His expression of personal grievance seemed almost to accuse Father Moxie of theft. He drew some very imposing red morocco books from his pocket and began turning the leaves.

"Um! Here I have it. Thursday, June fifteenth,—A very serious matter—a very serious matter. This at least should have had prompt attention from a firm who values its reputation." He cleared his throat heavily.

"Is it anything I can attend to?" Marjorie spoke with trembling meekness.

"Um, no, I hardly think so!" He swelled his bulging white front dangerously. "A very important matter—strictly private—strictly private. No, I hardly think so."

His eyes seemed to be measuring Marjorie's abbreviated petticoats disparagingly. She felt herself shrinking perceptibly. He was a terrible, terrible man. Perhaps he was the one who caused the "encumbrances." Perhaps Father Moxie owed him a great deal and couldn't pay it. He looked as though he wouldn't have the least mercy in the world. His big, baggy eyes didn't have a bit of feeling in them. He would strip away the last thing a body had without hurting his conscience a bit. Yes, no doubt they would lose their house and all the furniture would be sold, even the keepsakes. She determined, however, to rescue her very dearest old Carolyn Curls at all hazards. She might have to fight it out with him, but she resolved to do it sooner than lose her very last and dearest treasure. If Father Moxie was at the mercy of such a tyrant there wasn't the least hope in the world. A sense of injustice almost overwhelmed her. She wondered if it would do any good to say anything. He was so big and so—so broad. She decided that it wouldn't; still, she ventured a timid inquiry.

"Is—is it very important?—the business, I mean. —Does he owe you much—much money?" Her heart almost stood still as she waited for the answer.

"Young lady, when you are a little older you will know that all business matters are important, however trivial, though perhaps you won't—some people never learn it, hence so many failures. The first thing for a business enterprise that expects to get on, to learn" —the words seemed to rumble out of his great throat —"is to pay strict attention to all appointments. Tell your father I will call again!"

The echoes of that awful voice seemed to fill the dingy little office long after he had stamped his way down stairs. Yes, he was the man all right. Marjorie felt convinced of that. She imagined he made a business of selling people's houses from over their heads and stripping away their treasures. Oh, poor, poor father! and wasn't there a thing in the world she could do for him? It all looked so hopeless and she was so helpless. A vision of his careworn face flashed over her and she determined she would tell him about the fat man—but not that night.

She was just going back to the books when a firm hand turned the knob and an oily agent came in and drew the reception chair very close, and sat down full of confidence. His face was wreathed with smiles, and it was a relief, too, after so many distressing happenings. Marjorie had not yet learned the terror of agents, else she might have counted this as one of the calamities. Instead, she returned his seeming good humor with one of her sweetest, friendliest smiles.

"So rare to find an agreeable young person in an office now-a-days," he complimented her. "I can congratulate myself upon my good fortune. I have here a simple little device of unparalleled value to office people—in fact, once used it can never be dispensed with—that I know you will be interested in. It saves hours of tedious figuring, doing the work for you in an incredibly short time. Let me see! Here you have been doing something of that sort." He drew the heavy ledger toward him. "Here you have added this. This is your answer, is it not?—seven hundred and forty-nine. Now this simple little counting machine will do the work in much less time. Just watch!"

He set it up on the desk and proceeded to operate. Yes, in a jiffy there was the answer, correct, too. Marjorie's eyes bulged in amazement.

"It took me most an hour," she admitted, humbled before such gifted manifestations. "Oh, it would be such a saving to father." She reached out and touched the figured keys respectfully.

"It is surely a wonderful little invention and ought to be on every desk. Does the work swiftly and correctly, and is never out of order. No such thing as books not balancing, all the terrible mistakes that sometimes lose good men their positions,—mistakes that complicate firms and bankrupt millionaires,—done away with by this simple little device. Even the best of men will make mistakes. The brain becomes fagged with hours of long toiling over columns like this, the eyes refuse to see correctly. Let this thing of wood and iron do the work! Simply touch the numbers as you would the keys of a typewriter and there is your answer as plain as day. Away forever with the old tedious method of figuring it out! No such thing as break-down, or brain fag; no poor physical wrecks from over office hours. Who knows how many good firms have gone to smash from some little mistake in keeping the books! If any one thinks it is easy, let him try it! Column after column, and column after column. You know it isn't."

Yes, Marjorie knew. She sat up. Her eyes shone. Oh, if she could only get one for Father Moxie! He was a skillful agent. He watched her varying moods.

"Who knows how many helpless wrecks that crowd the city hospitals might have been spared to useful life by the use of this simple little device! If you have a father or a brother who toils his life away at this irksome desk, you can save him by ordering one of these lightning calculators. Oh, I see by your face that you have—no doubt a beloved father, and you have watched him day by day growing old and worn before his time, struggling along with a load far too heavy for his frail shoulders. I know how to sympathize with you; you have my heartfelt sympathy, and let me advise you as a friend, my dear young Miss, to invest in one of these lightning calculators. It is the best thing that you can do. It is the only thing that will save him. Oh, you will never regret it, I assure you. The price is so little, scarcely worth mentioning, and after all, what is money weighed in the balance with a loving father. I am sure you do not count it as anything."

Oh, no, she did not. She would give up the new red parasol that was coming. She would gladly go in rags—rags, for the sake of helping Father Moxie just ever so little a bit. The lump in her throat almost strangled her as she asked the price.

"We do not accept any money down, but only take your name. When the machine is delivered, three weeks from now, if you find it in perfect order you may pay ten dollars, which is really nothing at all for such a valuable concern. Were I in an office I would gladly pay ten times that amount could I not get one otherwise. You will never regret it, I assure you, when you see your father growing young and sprightly, the finger of care ceasing to furrow his face; you will count any little effort on your part well spent. You see our not delivering the goods for three weeks gives you ample time to arrange the small question of money! You don't need to worry about that at all. There are a great many ways that a girl of your size could earn ten dollars in three weeks," he suggested in answer to the crowding anxiety in her face. Oh, if she only could! If she could think of a way!

"We are very lenient. If, when we come to deliver the goods, you should not be able to pay all down, we will trust you for the rest. We will give you plenty of time. We want to make sure that you possess one of these very valuable machines. We are anxious to place one in every office in this city."

"Oh, would you do that? Would you?" Marjorie clasped her hands impulsively. "I'd do anything to get one for father. I'll slave. I'll do everything under the sun. Oh, if you only knew!" She found herself pouring out all the anxiety and the terrible fear of the last few days to this new and seemingly sympathetic listener.—"And oh, oh, if it should be 'encumbrances' and if it's the fat man there isn't the least hope in the world. The house will be sold and everything in it, and father is such a good, good father, and he thinks we don't know it, and nobody does but me, and I mean to stand by him—and oh, oh! I'd do anything, anything, if I could only help him, even so teenty a bit." If a lightning calculator would do it—She saw him writing her name with a sudden overwhelming sense of misgiving. Oh, what had she done! Ten dollars! Oh, how, *how* was she ever to get it!

As soon as Father Moxie came in she grabbed her hat and ran all the way home. Then because she could not tell any one there, she turned at the front gate and ran back as far as the fountain lady with four heads. The sight of her was comforting—Four heads! It seemed as though she could think better. She dropped down breathlessly upon one of the green park seats, her heart a wild and fluttering thing in her bosom. Life seemed to be presenting a great many complications all of a sudden.

CHAPTER IX

HER EXPERIENCES AS AN AGENT

"She didn't see as living on the avenue made a mite of difference with people's manners."

"How many did you get, Marj?" Dick waylaid his sister in a mad race for the kitchen cupboard. "I'll bet you never got a one." He snatched at the sweaty order book Marjorie clutched in her hand. "No, sir, not a one, not a single pelt. Mother, she never got an order." He called the information at the top of his voice. "You're a dandy canvasser, you are! Been gone three hours and never got a pelt. I'd give up."

Jane came to the sitting room door with her lap full of unfinished sewing.

"I didn't think they would be a good sale," she remarked, with an "I told you so" air. This irritated Marjorie beyond endurance. She made a lunge for the book and caught Dick by the sleeve.

"Give that back here, Dick Moxie! Do you hear me? Just give that right straight back, or I'll tell ma! Ma, can't Dick give me my book?"

"Richard, don't tease your sister!" Mother Moxie's voice came from the cellar where she was skimming milk.

"There, now! you just better paw it over! You had to go and scrunch it all up, didn't you, smartie? How do you know I didn't get an order? There's more than one page to that book, I'd have you know. Look there, will you, and there!" She displayed the closely-scribbled remnants of her last month's school test. "If it had been a bear 'twould a bit you."

"Aw, that ain't no order," Dick protested scathingly. "You can't fool me, Sis. You never got a one. Come, own up!" He loosened her last remaining ribbon.

"Well, I don't care, I'm not through yet. Just wait till I give up, will you? I've got more grit than you have, so there, Jonathan Brag! I'd like to know if there isn't a thing to eat in this cupboard. I'm starving." She rattled the dishes around desperately. "I thought there was a piece of pie-plant pie left. Dick Moxie, did you eat that? I don't see why you don't eat up everything there is. There was a piece of cake in that tin. I'd like to know what's become of it. I suppose if I look in the cookie jar that'll be empty. There never is a scrap of anything when you're around the house. I'd be a pig and be done with it. I guess if you'd worked as hard as I have you'd be hungry, too."

"What's the use of working?" Dick remarked disparagingly.

Marjorie turned upon him fiercely, "Now you stand there and croak, you horrid, mean thing. I wonder how it seems to be as mean as you are. I'd be ashamed of myself. I do believe you'd be tickled to death if I didn't get one. You'd be glad if I couldn't earn a cent to pay for that horrid old machine when it comes, and if father had to work himself into the grave adding up columns that you never will be smart enough to do, if you live to be as old as Methuselah. You'd just take it and spend it for horrid old footballs and things there ain't any sense in. You don't care how hard father works. Did you ever stay in the office an hour for him in all the days of your life? Answer me that! Would you go out and swelter in the hot sun and be snubbed by wretched old women for the sake of buying him anything? No, of course you wouldn't. All you can do is to stand around and discourage other folks. Anyhow, you couldn't expect folks to have a cent down on Troop Street. They're as poor as poverty's foot. I'm going up on Michigan Avenue. I only went there to get started. You just wait till night comes, Dick Moxie!" she prophesied, as she spread a thick slice of bread with beans and put a pickle on it.

The sun was hot. Marjorie paused on the front porch to dig her "sample" out of the croquet box where she had hidden it when she came in. She would have somebody's "pelt" before night, she vowed it, as she went out, slamming the gate with a vicious bang.

Michigan Avenue was the very swellest locality in all Northrum. All the houses were two-story, and some of them were brick. Mayor Newcomb had a fountain in his yard, and ever so many people had stone horses and things on their lawns. There were knockers on all the doors. But Marjorie began upon them boldly. The first, though she rang repeatedly, presented a stolid front. No one came to the door, and the small parting in the lacy front curtain drew together as if by magic. There was a moment of tiptoeing footsteps, then all was most oppressively silent and forbidding. They were at home but they weren't coming to the door.

Marjorie's blood grew hot. She rang the bell again, this time with redoubled energy. She snatched a geranium blossom out of the urn as she went angrily down the front steps. They wouldn't even give her a chance to show what she had. There wasn't anything in the world uglier than a cross woman. They seemed to be afraid to treat an agent decent. Just as if it would do any hurt to look at a thing and say it was nice,—and those that did look never had any money, or if they did they didn't dare to spend it until they could ask *"him."*

She had resolved to take them in their order, omitting none. She stuck to her resolution heroically, though three of the houses in succession remained stoically silent against her most vigorous advances.

The news of her approach had spread like contagion. At the fourth house a lady opened the door about two inches and peeked out.

"We wouldn't wish for anything to-day, thank you," she said with icy politeness that was meant to be final.

"But this is different. I know you never saw anything like this. Everybody wants them," Marjorie protested against the slowly-closing aperture. She unrolled the sample anxiously. "Please let me show you! It's really a lovely way to preserve photographs. It makes a beautiful ornament to any room,—stands on a beautiful easel and—." But the last hint of an opening had disappeared, and she heard the click of a patent lock on the inside.

Burning with indignation she turned away. Nobody would look at it. They wouldn't give her time to say the little speech she had sat down by the fountain lady and practiced a whole hour so she could say it by heart. It *was* a lovely medallion just the same, whether any one looked at it or not. The sample she carried was of a beautiful little girl with long curls and a muff. She was just as sweet as she could be,—and it had brass corners and everything. It was a fine way to preserve photographs. They couldn't get fly-specked nor anything, and a body could have a black border or a red border. They were just as nice as they could be whether anybody thought so or not.

How could folks know if they never even looked at them. Never, so long as she lived, would she slam the door in an agent's face. It was perfectly rude and horrid, and she didn't see as living on the avenue made a mite of difference with people's manners. Think of a lovely glass medallion as big as that, with such perfectly gorgeous corners and an easel to stand it up by, all for seventy-five cents. It was cheap—cheap as dirt, and anybody might be proud to own one.

At the next place she was told that there was a sick man inside and that they had company to dinner, and that the cook had left all of a sudden. Of course one couldn't be expected to be interested in medallions under such trying circumstances. At a very prim gray house on the corner, that Marjorie recognized as the home of the Sunday-school superintendent, a little girl came to the door with the information that her mamma was not at home, though Marjorie felt sure that she had seen that good lady not a moment before entering from the back yard. However, it was quite useless to say she was, if she wasn't, so there was nothing to do but go on to another. Here a very dark-eyed lady who looked like the witch of Endor, her face done up in red flannel rags and a steaming brick in her hand, threw the door open savagely, and Marjorie did not feel much disposed to press the matter.

A fussy little lady in a handkerchief kimona, her mouse-colored hair held up by one glaring aluminum pin, wanted one done of her dead brother Alexander, but *he* didn't allow her to buy anything of agents, so of course she couldn't give the order. Marjorie solemnly made vows concerning the marriage relation that should she ever decide to enter it at least half of the money should be hers to do with as she pleased, and never once should she ask "*him.*" It was a shame the poor woman couldn't have a picture of her dead brother Alexander done if she wanted to. Marjorie meditated that if she were *very* rich she would give her one as a present just to make such a stingy man ashamed of himself.

Hot and discouraged she tried the last house on the street. It was a lovely brown brick, trimmed with fancy shingles and queer little latticed windows. There was a balcony of crimson geraniums across the front and flower urns on either side the walk. A lady in a rustling silk gown came to the door and opened it ever so little. She was putting on her hat to go out and had the pins in her mouth. She shook her head at Marjorie and said that it was useless to undo the medallion, but Marjorie kept on desperately.

"I wouldn't care for anything at all. I never buy such things," she protested,—"besides I'm very busy." She began to close the door, but goaded beyond endurance Marjorie put her stout little boot in the crack. She would insure enough room to talk through at least. For once she was going to tell it. She was going to tell it through to the end.

"It's—it's a medallion," she persisted. "It's just lovely. Everybody thinks so that sees it." It wasn't an untruth. Few had seen it. "It won't take but a minute to show you. It's got beautiful brass corners and an easel to stand it up by."

"I never buy such things of agents, they are so cheap and—and common."

"But this isn't cheap. It costs seventy-five cents. It's nice thick glass and the corners are pure brass (she wondered if they really were), and you can have anybody's picture done,—your own or your little girl's or anybody's,—and if there's two of them it doesn't cost any more, and you don't have to pay a cent down till we bring it back all fixed for you, and you can't deny but that seventy-five cents is cheap for such a perfectly beautiful medallion with brass corners," she persisted with blissful disregard for contradictions. She had followed the lady into the house and kept close to her heels relentlessly. She held the little girl with curls and muff up between her and her reflected vision in the hall mirror by which she was trying to adjust her veil.

"You can have either a black background or a green one or a red one, and it preserves the pictures beautifully. They never get even a speck nor a scratch nor anything. You know how soon pictures get ruined,—all dug up and specky? Well, this will keep them forever and ever. It keeps the picture from fading. (The manufacturer had assured her of this.) It will look just lovely sitting in there on your piano, or on the mantel, and we tint it all in natural colors if you want us to, no matter if it's just a plain photograph, we make it look like a painting. Just think, pink cheeks and blue or brown eyes, just as you like. We—"

"I'm going out now." The lady had adjusted her veil. She took the key from the door. Marjorie followed so close that she stepped upon the lady's long sweeping train.

"Haven't you just one picture of somebody?" she persisted,—"your husband,—you could surprise him. Have one done of your baby—or—or your mother!" Down the steps and along the walk. "It's cheap—only seventy-five cents. Surely you can afford that. You might think of somebody's. We could put a chain on it to hang it up by if you'd rather have it than the easel. I believe it *is* better. An easel is bound to be knocked over. Has your husband blue eyes? Blue eyes do beautifully. Couldn't you give me just one order?"

Marjorie stood helplessly on the walk, but the lady kept on. She wasn't going to! Oh, she wasn't! She never even looked behind. The voluminous folds of her veil floated after her. It wasn't any use. There wasn't any way to *make* people look unless you took them right by the neck and held them. Her feet dragged as she crossed through to Green Street. Green Street was cool, with many trees and many posy gardens in all the yards. Posy gardens were ever so much dearer than lawns, and common little dogs that ran out and barked at you weren't half as terrible as great closed doors all elaborate with glass and brass knobs and things. The sight of dirty little children wallowing in the gutter was refreshing. Why was it that all good people were poor?

Marjorie walked dejectedly by, on past the houses. She hadn't the heart to try any more; besides, one of the gaudy brass corners had become loosened and kept falling off and rattling down onto the walk. She sat down on a nearby hitching block and tried to fix it. She managed to secure it after a fashion with a pin. The sight of the meek little girl with the curls and the muff was growing hateful to her. Her own face was red and perspiring. Her hair hung in stringy wisps that were sticky and hot. Her feet ached so that she could hardly drag them over the stone walks. What would mother say! What would Dick say! What would Jane! Above all, what would the agent who was coming in just three weeks for ten whole, terrible dollars? She arose again wearily, goaded to final desperate effort.

At the very farthest end of the street, at the most dilapidated weather-beaten house, surrounded by empty lots, a woman was hanging up clothes. A long line of them flapped briskly in the breeze and the ends of the knotted red handkerchief about her head flapped too. What Marjorie could see of her ruddy face looked common and homely. She went up to the defaced little front door and rang. She had to ring several times very loudly before the woman with the handkerchief over her head could hear, then she came clumping in from the back door, shaking her fist threateningly.

"You go vay! I vant notting—notting," she commanded. "I vork all day. I got no times to boder mit you. Some agent or other a-coming ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling the whole times. When you spose I get mine vashing on the line if I chase up one hundred times already to that bell, say?"

Marjorie began fearfully on her explanations; but the woman shook her head stubbornly, and put both her hands over her ears to shut out any possible enlightenment.

"I not leesten," she cried. "I not buy anytings, I told you so. You must go avay or I call de bolicemans. What for you want to boder me till I mad?" She pushed Marjorie bodily from the door and shut it with a bang. "Next time I not come vay in for

"*It's a perfectly lovely thing. See there now! Isn't it?*"

nottings," she grumbled, as she pattered away to her boiler of clothes and the waiting tubs.

Marjorie heard her big clumsy shoes going. Irritated beyond endurance she ran down the front steps and around to the back door. When the good woman stepped out with a fresh armful she confronted her with a look of stubborn persistence.

"I'm not going to stir a step off this porch till I've told you about it," she said firmly. "It's lovely, and you've got to see it. I'm not an agent. I never sold a thing in my life; but I'm going to sell this. You've got to look at this whether you want to or not." She began unrolling the sample. "If you put your fingers over your eyes I'll follow you around till you have to open 'em, so you might as well do it first as last. I'm not going to be treated so. I just won't. What would you do if you just had to have money and there wasn't any other way? You'd sell something, too, or you'd try to, and how would you feel if every single place as good as turned you out of doors, and wouldn't even look,—supposing they stuck their fingers in their ears when you tried to talk and wouldn't even listen! Wouldn't you be discouraged, too? Wouldn't you just think people were the horridest, meanest things? But I won't let you be as mean as you want to be. I don't care if you do send for the policeman. If you do, I'll sell him one, too. It's a perfectly lovely thing. See there now! Isn't it?"

She waved it in the air and the corner stayed on beautifully. "That glass is a quarter of an inch thick, and you can have it done in any color you want, and on an easel or a perfectly lovely chain to hang it up by. We take any photograph that you want done and fix it all up for you and tint it just like life, and if there are any blemishes,—warts, you know, or things like that, we take them off free of charge, and the corners are real brass and it's only seventy-five cents, and you don't pay till we bring the picture so you can see if it is all right." She plunged on excitedly, fearful lest she be overtaken in her narrative. "You can see for yourself how it protects the picture and how nice it is. Now isn't it nice?" She forced it under the little old-country woman's nose. "It would be an ornament to any parlor, now wouldn't it? Did you ever see anything more perfectly lovely in all your life? A picture positively can't get soiled done up in this way." The woman sat down on the cistern curb with the pan of clothes in her lap and laughed and laughed, till Marjorie grew uneasy. She felt anxiously of the loose corner.

"It really does protect them. The man told me himself that it kept them from fading, and see how sweet and pink this little girl's cheeks are; just like life. Haven't you got some picture you would like to have made like that?" The woman laughed harder and louder.

"Vell, you vas a good von. You sure got me cornered now. You vas all right, all right. You beat them all. I tink me you sell sometings." She laughed again till a part of the twists of wet clothes rolled from the pan to the floor.

"Ach Himmel! She chase me to de kitchen. She schtick it under mine nose, bold little hussy! She sure vas all right. She give up, no. I like dot. She got dem all beat, so."

"But it is pretty, isn't it? It makes a beautiful ornament and lasts forever. I know you would love to have one, anybody would. Surely you have a picture of some one,—your little girl or—or maybe your husband."

"Ach Gott! I haf pictures, yes." The woman ceased laughing and swayed to and fro over the curb. "It is all I do haf." She led Marjorie inside. All the hard lines of her face had melted; there was only a childish eagerness for sympathy. She brought out a bright red photograph album with a heart-shaped mirror set in the cover.

"They are all in there,—mine family. Seex of dem all dead. Ach! mine poor dear huspand!" She wiped her eyes on her brown gingham apron, looking at it for a dry spot.

Marjorie contemplated the group with silent sympathy,—spat-footed little *frauleins* in linsey petticoats, a little colorless boy in knickerbockers, his hair very much uncut,—a man and a woman corralling the six into a circle to be "took,"—the man with a great deal of watch chain twined in and out through his buttonholes, the woman with great "ear bobbers," her hands spread decorously upon her front, keeping a vigilant eye upon the wriggling twins at her knee. It was touching to think that they were all dead; Marjorie's voice sunk to a respectful whisper as she asked:

"Wouldn't it be *some* comfort to have them where you could look at them always, instead of put away in an album?—an album is so like a—a grave." She meant to be consoling, but somehow she seemed to fail of her mission. The woman broke out afresh.

"Ach, yes! It is like a grave; but as well here as there. Mine huspand he leaf me poor—no moneys. I vash me for a leefing."

In a moment she was pouring out all the long, miserable story. Marjorie sat stiff and uncomfortable on the haircloth sofa till it was finished.

"I vas a poor old voomans whom nopody cares at all for any more now already. If I only had me mine dear huspand and seex childer."

"Yes, but some people haven't even a picture," Marjorie comforted. "It is a very good picture." She spoke hesitatingly, looking about for a possible place to set a medallion in case one had one. "Did your little girls have yellow hair?" she asked timidly.

"Yellow hair looks beautiful. We could tint them just as natural, and their eyes."

"Ach, Gott! they were as blue as the sky," wailed the mother,—"and they are all dead."

"They would look as though they were alive if they were tinted. Just think! pink cheeks and red lips!" suggested Marjorie, eager to be of some consolation. "It would be a great deal of comfort I am sure to have them tinted. The little boy looks like his father," she remarked by way of diversion.

"So? Ach, mine poor little Fritzie! Mine poor huspand! It iss bad to lose a good huspand. I haf to vash me for a leefing."

"What color were your husband's eyes?" Marjorie made one more attempt to turn the doleful drift of conversation.

"Same like blue, too. A little darker nor the childer. Hes hair vas not so—yellow, vat you call it. He was von good-looking man, mine huspand, tink?" She asked the question anxiously. "Ven we got ourselves married ve vas said to be von good-looking couples already. Trouble like I haf had takes dose tings away." She sighed as she crossed her water-soaked hands upon the brown gingham and swayed to and fro in the blue plush rocker with a red head rest.

"Ve vas von good-looking families. Mine little girls were all so plump and rosy till they get themselves seek and die so quick, and mine little poy, everybody say he was one handsome little poy. He haf much freckles on his face so. The picture show them not on. I like not to lose the freckles mit his dear little nose off. Tink you could put freckles back, youst so, on mine dear little poy's face?"

"Oh, yes, I think we could," Marjorie replied enthusiastically. Freckles would be easy, just little brown specks. Surely they could do freckles for the sake of pleasing a poor woman who had lost six children and one husband. She found herself convincing her simple listener of the ability of the "firm" to produce freckles in any quantity and color.

"And mine huspand he vas lost one finger mit the picture in. I like not to see him so. It vas a blemish, vat you call it. I like for you to put him on one finger, please. On the little girls' necks you may put chains, gold chains mit lockets on, and on mine own finger I vould like a ring, if you please."

Marjorie wrote down the directions fearfully. She had a great deal of faith in the possibility of what could be done; but the making of a whole finger was a rather serious undertaking, however she assumed the responsibility with as much confidence as she could possibly muster.

"Of course it may not look just like a real finger," she intimated, "but we'll do the best we can." She agreed to furnish rubies for the five lockets, and set the ring with a showy emerald. She convinced the woman that an emerald would be much better than a diamond, as diamonds, being of no special color, would be a little difficult to manage.

Out on the street she read through the list with compunction: "One batch of freckles, one finger, five chains with lockets, one gold ring, five rubies, one emerald." Yes, it might be a little difficult, no doubt it would be, yet when all the particulars were understood—surely a woman who had lost so much was due some special consideration.

She carried the picture safely wrapped in brown paper and tied with a blue yarn string. Her spirits began to rise. At last she had an order,—one. True, it wasn't as many as a dozen; but it was something to show Dick,—something to waive Jane's contempt. One was a great many more than none. She shouldn't have to face the cold disgust of the "manager." He couldn't quite ignore a girl who had gotten one order, though he could never, never know the terrible things she had been through to accomplish even so little. Never, as long as she lived, would she be a real, regular agent, no, not if her life depended on it. It would be easier to starve respectably than to face all those terrible unfeeling women daily. She would never blame Mother Moxie again for talking to a poky old agent while everybody was starving to have supper put on.

On the corner of Elm Street she ran into Dick. He had been to the grocery for peanuts. She just knew it. He was cracking some. She pounced upon him and went through his pockets like a whirlwind.

"Give me some, pig! Where are they? You're eating them. I smell 'em. Fresh roasted! Oh, Dick! I'm famished! Can't you whack up? Don't be a stingy. Oh, here they are! Salted ones! Oh, goody, goody! If there was a thing in the world I wanted worst it was peanuts. How did you ever think of it?"

"Oh, I reckoned I'd run onto you some place, and that you'd need bracing up,—anybody who works all day and don't get an order."

"But I did, so there, smartie! Who says I didn't?" Marjorie waved the brown bundle tied with blue yarn. "It's a family group—six children and a man and woman and they're all dead, that is, all but the woman, and the man has to have a finger put on."

"A finger put on? Pooh! They can't put a finger on anything."

"Of course it will be a rather delicate job but I think it can be done. The boy has to be made freckled. He isn't; but of course the woman wants him to be now that he is dead."

"Let's see the old thing anyhow!" Dick demanded irreverently. "It must be a freak lot all right."

"Well, it's not. These are five little girls and their eyes are all to be tinted blue and they all have yellow hair. It will be lovely. We are going to put gold chains on them, and the lockets are to be set with rubies."

"Pshaw!" Dick had succeeded in undoing the many wrappings, and he waved the picture contemptuously. "Medallion! Huh! Whatever made you think you could make a medallion of this! A tintype—Huh! You'd better go trot it back, Sis, and tell 'em it's all off."

"But why not?" Marjorie stood overwhelmed. All her peanuts fell in a shower to the walk. She looked at Dick with round, terrified eyes.

"Why not?" she repeated blankly.

"Well, just because it can't, that's why. Who ever heard of making a medallion of a tintype? You're a good one, you are. I'd be sick." His taunting tones spurred Marjorie back from the depths of despondency.

"It's going to be done! Do you hear, Dick Moxie? There's isn't any *can't* about it. Anything can be done that has to be. Yes, it's a tintype, but it's going to be made into a medallion just the same, and I'm not coming back till it is, so there!" She swept past him with a grand air of dignity to fulfill her promise.

"Good-bye, Sis! We won't keep a light burning. There won't be any use," Dick called after her, mockingly, but she never turned to look at him or to wave the usual good-bye.

CHAPTER X

AVERTING A TRAGEDY

"There's always something that makes it worth while to do things, isn't there?"

The man who made the medallions was a very imposing person. Marjorie always stood in awe of people with black whiskers, and this man's were very black and trimmed pointed, just as she had seen pictures of Satan. He wore shining patent leather shoes too, peaked at the toes, that somehow suggested cloven hoofs. His beady little eyes focused narrowly upon the despised tintype; but Marjorie did not wait for any remarks. She plunged into a confusion of explanation.

"It will be rather hard of course; but it must be done." She finished the first deluge. "It isn't any laughing matter to lose a family like that, I tell you. If it was any ordinary case it would be different but it isn't. I tell you that poor woman's eyes are just bulged out now with crying and wiping them on her apron. Do you s'pose I'd take that picture back and tell her it couldn't be done? I just won't do it. I'll sit right down here and stay all summer first."

"Indeed." The man tried to conceal a twinkle by lowering his shaggy black brows. "We scarcely anticipate staying so long ourselves."

"If she had somebody else, but she hasn't got not even a dog or—or a cat;—just this horrible picture stuck off where she can't see it, and tinting would make them look so much more alive. She always meant to get her little girls gold chains, but they didn't live till Christmas, but if she could see them on in the picture, you know, she could make believe that they did. Don't you think that if you had lost five little girls it would be some comfort to think that they had lovely gold chains with ruby lockets?—And the poor woman never had a ring in her life. Think of that! Not even a little brass ring that comes with gum, she said so. And think what a consolation to see her poor dear husband with a finger! It was a terrible accident. She came near losing him once before. Think of losing your husband twice. She used to be very good looking; but you ought to see her now. Trouble has caused it. So you see it is positively necessary. If it was positively necessary could it be done?"

"Possibly, but it would be hardly worth while. Tintypes do not adhere to glass very successfully."

"Oh, but with a very great deal of glue and—and patience?—If you used twice as much glue for instance? Surely there must be some way. You oughtn't to give up so easily. Supposing it does take longer, supposing it takes twice as long, wouldn't it be worth while? If all your children were dead wouldn't you want to do everything on earth to make them look alive,—wouldn't you? Say! And those little girls had lovely yellow hair and blue eyes. Would you want them to stand there like pale gray dummies forever and forever? Of course you couldn't make them handsome, nobody could; but you could do your best, then you wouldn't have it on your conscience. Who could be handsome, I'd like to know, in such funny little petticoats and ugly shoes. It seems to me people should be much more carefuller about how they dressed their children when they were having their pictures taken. It's like naming them, it's something that can't be changed. Think of having to face people forever and forever, looking like a fright! It's too bad they can't be dressed over like paper dolls, isn't it, then even people who were dead could keep up with the styles. I think some way might be invented. No doubt there will be.

"—And just think! her little boy was freckled, *very* freckled. What business had the artist taking all the freckles off him, answer me that! I mean to see that they are put on again, a great many of them. It makes a great deal of difference being dead. If he was alive they would want them taken off, because really freckles aren't becoming; but being dead he can't look any too natural, can he? Most people want things taken off. It is a little unusual wanting so many things put on, isn't it? Is it much more trouble to put things on than to take them off?

"I think I shall be haunted forever and ever by the sight of that poor old thing rocking herself and weeping over her lost family. It was a terrible sight. It's awful to see folks rocking themselves when they're unhappy.—And really it does seem as though one of them might have lived, so many people do live. People who have only one or two children manage to raise them, and it seems as though a woman who had six would stand some show, doesn't it? After all it is rather risky depending on anything, even six. Something is sure to turn up. It always does, or else it don't. Always when one depends on it, then it don't. Now you would naturally think that if *any one* lived those stout little Dutch children would, wouldn't you? They don't look subject to a thing in the world."

"It might have been smallpox."

"Yes, or the measles. They probably had the German measles. Anyhow it was hard to lose six and a husband, it must have been—terrible. I know when my Vivian Evangeline died I didn't get over it for weeks. It seemed as though I could hear her crying clear out in the orchard where we made her grave. It was absolutely necessary to bury her, however, as her stuffing was leaking all over the carpet. We kept her till there was positively nothing of her but a skeleton. She was the victim of a wreck, poor dear. We wrote it on her tombstone and it looked lovely: 'Vivian Evangeline, killed by accident the 13th day of May, aged 3 years, six months, and seven days.' We buried her right between a dead toad and our precious Willie Winktum, who drowned a terrible death in the cistern. Jane left the cistern cover up and we made her sew the shroud to pay for it.

"Willie Winktum was certainly a dear little cat. I shall never cease regretting him.—Just the fluffiest, cuddliest kitten. He used to love to put his little black paws on my cheek. Did you ever love a cat? If you did you know just how it feels to lose one, or even a doll; though Vivian Evangeline was only glass and never knew what hit her when the organ stool fell over on her.—But a real live baby, multiplied by six. Oh, it must have been terrible—terrible! And then to have to wash on top of it, to keep the wolf from the door! That's what she does, she told me so herself. Her hands are just like wet beans, they look as though they had been *boiled*. Oh, you haven't any idea; but you'll do the best you can for her, won't you,—and please put an emerald in the lady's ring. She always wanted an emerald. It may be a little hard but you mustn't mind that. Just think what a lot of good you are doing in the world. Will it be very, very hard to put freckles on a little boy, and a finger on a man?" At last she thought her arguments were sufficient to venture a direct question. "I imagine it will be a rather delicate operation, but it could be done, couldn't it? Did you ever put on a finger or—or a thumb or anything like that?"

"Can't say as I ever did. It's a little out of the usual order."

"But it could be done?—Not a real sure enough finger, but something to imagine one, you know?"

"Yes, I s'pose it could," reluctantly.

"—And most really important things are hard. Now it was hard to come here. I never could tell you how hard. It seemed terrible to think of facing you, but I did it you see." She smiled up at him with a fleeting show of bravery.

"It made a big lump in here. I can feel it yet; but I'm not going to give up, not till I get every last thing that I came for—chains with ruby lockets, and freckles, and all. I—I shan't give up if—if it chokes me." She struggled bravely with her confessed emotion.

"Do I look so fierce?" he questioned, the smile at last getting the better of his lowered brows. "What is there about me that is so awe-inspiring?"

"I—I guess it's your whiskers," she admitted, taking courage over the weakening lines of his face. "But I'm not afraid of you any more. I think your whiskers are very nice—only black whiskers are rather—rather fierce, don't you think so?"

"Well, perhaps. What else?"

"You frown a great deal, though I don't suppose you mean a word of it. Father doesn't. He gets that way from squinting over long sums and no doubt you get yours from putting on freckles or maybe taking them off, and putting rings on fat old ladies' hands that never had one. I haven't anything to say about wrinkles. I shall have a great many when I get old. I can feel them coming." She rubbed a prospective forefinger over her youthful brow. "They say that wrinkles are a sign of how many children you are going to have. Do you believe that? If it should be true I guess I will have a houseful all right. See there!" She showed him her face puckered into as many wrinkles as possible.

"It certainly does look as though you would have your hands full." He no longer tried to restrain his merriment. His hearty laugh put Marjorie at her ease.

"But perhaps it isn't a sign of children any more than it's a sign of ugly temper," Marjorie suggested. "If father had children for all his wrinkles he wouldn't be able to support them. Don't you suppose that an adding machine would be a great comfort to any one who had a great many sums to do? Isn't an adding machine a perfectly lovely invention?" The man was becoming so very agreeable she longed for sympathy.

—"A wonderful adding machine with keys and everything?" Her tones were full of eager inquiry.

"Yes, I guess they are." There was interest. There was kindly concern. "Why, what do you know about adding machines?" Marjorie's heart bounded.

"Because I'm buying one for father," she burst out impulsively. "The man is coming with it in just three weeks, and I'm to raise the money somehow. I don't know how. That's why I'm here. I just had to do something; but I guess I wasn't cut out for a canvasser." The lump was swelling again. "P—people wouldn't listen." She had risen from the office chair in her eagerness but she sank down again heavily and sighed. "They wouldn't even let me in." She swallowed hard but a tear crept out in spite of her and moistened her lashes. "One woman slammed the door." Her spirits went down to the lowest ebb, but with her usual spontaneousness they rose again as swiftly.

"It's been a terrible experience, but if I had never gone through it I should never have found out about the poor old woman, would I?—nor—nor how little there is in the color of a person's whiskers. There's always something that makes it worth while to do things, isn't there?" Her smile came flickering back. "I did so want to help father," she confided.

The last awe-inspiring thing had deserted the man. He sat patiently and listened while Marjorie divulged all the terrible secret, describing as best she could the overwhelming condition of Father Moxie's ledgers. When she went away she carried with her all sorts of promises concerning the tintype, and a bright, new fifty-cent piece as her share of the bargain. After all, black-whiskered men were the gentlest sort.

When she reached the office all the dreaded calamities seemed to have drawn to a focus. Father Moxie was waiting for her with his hat on, and his face showed such lines of evident distress that she longed to throw herself into his arms right then and there and beg an explanation; but he scarcely waited to answer the first of her anxious inquiries.

"Nothing is the matter—a little cold steel is all I need." She caught the disjoined sentences. Cold steel! Oh, what did Father Moxie mean? Oh, what terrible thing was going to happen? A new fear clutched at her heart, gripping—giving no peace. Sometimes people lost their minds and were sent away to terrible places. Business troubles were often the cause of such things. Marjorie began straightening miserably at the papers on the desk. A strange presentiment of evil seemed to hover about the place. She lifted a handful of loose papers and something rattled from them noisily. It was a small vial branded with that terrible, terrible skull and crossbones. She sank weakly into the chair and deciphered the label, "chloroform." Oh, father, father! What was he about to do? Oh, what awful thing had she discovered? Her own precious father, and perhaps even now it was too late to avert a tragedy.

She pulled the cork and smelled of the sickening fluid. She remembered once when they had bought some to chloroform a dog who was too old to eat and too blind to see. The memory of his poor stiffened limbs and staring eyes when they had lifted the box, haunted her. She ran down the stairs and looked up and down the street, but Father Moxie had disappeared from sight. Perhaps he had thought that there was not enough and had gone for more. The nearest drug store was three doors away. She ran and looked in, but he was not there. She went to the corner and looked both ways but could not discern the familiar figure among the moving pedestrians. Oh, where was he? He couldn't have gone so far in just such a little time. Not daring to leave the office alone she went back miserably, only to pace the floor in a fever of anxiety. A sickening odor filled the room, ever reminding her. The great clock over her head ticked a solemn prophecy. Now she pushed the window to the top, leaning far out to scan the street, only leaving it to run into the hall and look down the long flight of stairs and listen for his returning footsteps. The hour passed and his usual time for coming. Every moment increased her anxiety. To add to her convictions, she picked a slip of paper from the floor. It had been torn in strips and a part of it was missing, but she read: "—finish up the job this afternoon for good. Will look for you at four." The name was gone. Oh, where was father, and what terrible thing was the job that was being finished up? Her heart stood still as she thought of it.

Five minutes past, ten minutes past, fifteen. She clutched the little vial of chloroform in her hand convulsively as she paced and waited. She was white and trembling when Father Moxie reached the stair landing, and she threw herself upon him in a paroxysm of emotion, hugging him to her, then holding him at arm's length to scan his face. It was drawn and haggard. The smell of anesthetics was on his clothes. "Oh, father!" she sobbed. "What is it? What is it? Oh dear, won't you tell me—Marjorie? Oh, I know it is awful, but I can stand it. I am brave, father. Whatever it is I will stand by you." She threw herself into his arms as he sat down and rocked him to and fro. "I don't care if the house must be sold, not even if all the very dearest treasures must go—I'll even let you kill the Appetite and Catastrophe, and even all the kittens, even down to dear little Nugget of Gold. I could bear anything but *that.* Oh, father!" She was sobbing convulsively by now, and Father Moxie had to soothe her.

"Why, little daughter, what put such ideas into your head? Who told you the house was to be sold or any of the treasures? What are you afraid of, Marjorie?" She raised her tear-stained face from his coat.

"Aren't there any en—en—cumbrances?" The word was shattered by a sob. "Don't you owe that fat man ever and ever so much, and isn't he going to f—foreclose?" Father Moxie hugged her close.

"Whoever has been telling you all this?" he asked her tenderly.

"No—no—nobody. The fat man came. He's a terrible man. He said you didn't tend—to—business —and—" Father Moxie smiled over her head. He was well acquainted with the fat man. "—And you are so p—pale and g—gray." She wept afresh. In vain he tried to assure her that he was all right, that everything was going on as usual.

"The business was never better in its life," he told her. "Why, the profits this year are going to run way up. Encumbrances? Well, I should say not."

"They are such long columns—the debts, I mean. I tried to add them. You—you looked so worried and sick. Oh, father!" She snuggled up farther into his neck. Her hand still clutched the awful convincing vial.

"But I'm not sick," he protested, "—that is, I feel fine now. I was a little off, but it wasn't anything serious."

"And weren't you going to do anything—dreadful?" Marjorie hugged him again in a vise-like grip. "Oh, father!"

"What terrible thing could I do, child?" he asked anxiously; then his hand felt the little obstacle in hers and drew it out. It all dawned on him in a flash.

"Why, Marjorie! do you think your father would be guilty of that? Haven't you more faith in me than that, dear? Why should I want to die when I have so much to live for—such blessed children?" He held her as though she had been a baby.

"When terrible cri—i—ises come people aren't responsible," Marjorie sobbed brokenly.

"But no crisis has come—none is coming. That chloroform was bought for the toothache, child; but even that won't bother me any more, for I have it out, you see?" He showed a gaping cavity in the even row of his teeth.

"I made a date with Dr. Johnson for this afternoon. That is where I hurried off to so fast."

"I found a note. It—it said a job to be finished," Marjorie stammered, light at last commencing to dawn.

"And that, too, was mystifying, wasn't it? Well, now can't you smile a little when you find that the most serious thing that has been the trouble all these days has been the toothache, and that now even the possibility of that is removed? Why didn't you come and 'fess it all to father?"

"I—I thought you were trying to shield us, I wanted to make you believe that you were. Oh, father!" The relief of it left her weak and helpless in his arms. Lying there, she told him all about the persistent agent and the wonderful counting machine; and all about the medallions and the black-whiskered man who was really kind, and the poor old woman whose family was dead. She unrolled the bright fifty-cent piece from the corner of her pocket kerchief.

"It isn't much, but it's a beginning and there's most three weeks left; I'll find something else. I can do anything now that I know you are all right, father, dear. I shan't even mind facing horrible old women."

"Brave little girl!" He stroked her hair tenderly. "She'd do anything in the world to help me, wouldn't she? You don't know what a comfort it is to know that; but you needn't worry about the counting machine. I've been looking for one a good while and will be glad to pay for this. Keep your fifty cents, dear, and here's a dollar to go with it. Run down town now and buy you that pretty parasol you were speaking of, and some day we'll take time to run up the credit column and see how the books balance, won't we? I want you to know what a really thriving business this is growing to be so that you won't become discouraged with the prospect of becoming a future partner. Hey, little daughter? I'm counting on that, you know," and he smoothed back her ruffled tresses and kissed her tenderly before he let her go.

CHAPTER XI

TAKING TESTS

"One never knew until afterwards just how one was going to feel about it."

"Here's a word I'll bet you can't spell, Dick Moxie! —Pneumatic. There! I've got you stuck."

"Huh!" Dick brought his heels down from an aimless pawing of the air, and raised his head. He was lying, stomach down, on the sitting room carpet, contemplating the "funny part" of Father Moxie's daily paper. "N-e-u-m-a-t-i-c-k."

"Nope."

"P-n-u-m-a-t-i-c-k."

Marjorie shook her head.

"T-i-c, then."

"Well, that helps one end of it, but it's wrong yet. You're a good speller, you are!"

"P-n-e-u-g-h-m-a-t-i-c," he corrected desperately. "There! that's right, Miss. You needn't pretend it isn't."

"But 'tisn't. You're getting colder every minute. I knew I had you stuck all right."

"Well, then, I'll spell it n-u-nu—m-a-t-i-c—matic. There isn't any need of wasting so many letters. I guess if it's good enough for the President of the United States it's good enough for anybody."

"But the President don't hear our spelling class and Professor Stoddard does, and he's going to examine us, Dick Moxie, just to-morrow morning. Do you hear that?—In the morning the siege commences. Tests, tests, tests! Dear! I wish I was smart! P-n-e-u-m-a-t-i-c, P-n-e-u-m-a-t-i-c." She studied desperately. "If I knew what they were going to ask, then I'd know what to study; but to think of learning everything in the horrid old book. Here's a sticker. H-i-e-r-o-g-l-y-p-h-i-c. I'll bet you couldn't have spelled that, Dick Moxie!"

"Pshaw! That's easy." Dick retorted, contemptuous with suddenly-acquired knowledge. "What are you wasting your time with those easy things for? Why not pick out the hard ones? Now here's one with six letters that I'll bet you can't spell. Gneiss. Try that."

"Why! n-i-c-e, of course." Marjorie was full of indignation.

"Well, that's nice all right, but it's not this sort of a gneiss."

"Well, there's a city in—in Turkey, I think; but it's spelled the same way."

"Give up?" Dick questioned triumphantly.

"No, I don't, Dick Moxie. If there's any other sort of a nice it's n-e-i-c-e or n-y-c-e or g-n-y-c-e or—what does it mean, anyhow?"

"It's some sort of a stone or other," Dick admitted reluctantly.

"Oh! Gnice," she spelled haltingly.

"You're down, Miss. You've had more'n three trials, too. G-n-e-i-s-s." He gave out the letters with slow dignity. "Now you see you can't spell little words with six letters."

"Well, you couldn't spell it yourself, smartie, if you didn't have it right under your nose."

"And here's another. Spell fuchsia! I'll bet you a chew of gum you can't."

"Oh, you needn't think you can stick me on that, Dick Moxie! We had that word only the other day. F-u-s-c-h-i-a," she spelled glibly. "So there now! Mr. Wiseacre, paw over your gum!" She scrambled to where he was on the floor and began searching his pockets.

"Hold on!" he arrested her. "You'd better try again. You missed it about a mile. I knew you would."

"I said f-u-s-c-h-i-a!"

"I know you did."

"Well, that's right, isn't it?"

"I should say not."

"Then it's f-u-s-h-c-i-a," she corrected with a toss of independence.

"F-u-c-h-s-i-a." He gave the knowledge impressively. "Glad you didn't win, Sis; I didn't have but one chew left, and I need that myself." He took it from his pocket and leisurely undid the wrapping.

"Oh, give me some, Dick! Break it in two?" Marjorie pleaded. "I haven't had a chew this week. Please! Pretty please!" She held out her hands appealingly; but Dick ignored their eloquence.

"Couldn't spare it. Just enough for me myself."

He made a pass to put it in his mouth, but Marjorie was upon him. There was a scuffle, during which the organ stool went over and Jane's rack of church hymns came tumbling down. After repeated efforts he managed to close his greedy jaws upon the coveted morsel.

"There now! That settles it. I was going to divvy but now I shan't," he tortured her. "I guess when a girl jumps on a fellow and stamps him around and pulls out half his hair, she can't expect much. It's awful good gum, Marj. See!" He spun it out in a shining strand from his teeth. Marjorie made a grab, but did not get any.

"You're a regular—regular—*porpoise,*" she called him as she went back to her neglected spelling book. "I hope you'll swallow it and choke—so! Here's a word you can't spell anyhow. Paralyze. If you try three times and can't spell it, will you give me a piece?"

"Huh! You'd like to have me promise, wouldn't you? But I shan't, though I can spell it. It's dead easy. P-a-r-a-l-i-z-e."

"There! that's one chance," counted Marjorie.

"Well, then, p-a-r-e-l-y-z-e."

"Nope."

"P-a-r-y—pary—l-i-s-e—lise."

"Three times, Mr. Goodspeller. It's P-a-r-a-l-y-z-e, as plain as the nose on your face. Anybody ought to know that. Give me some gum now!"

"Well, I should say not." Dick clapped a protecting hand over his mouth. "See any cucumbers sticking out of my pockets? I never promised, Missy."

"No, but you ought to. I'd be ashamed to lie there, and chank it right in folks' face and eyes."

"Shame is an unknown sensation," Dick told her. "Anyhow, I feel lovely when I'm ashamed."

"No, you aren't ashamed. Some folks never are. It's a sign of depravity. If there's a boy in the world that's meaner than you are I'd like to know who lives with him. I know one thing, Dick Moxie, if you don't get a book and get to work instead of wasting hours over those Foxy Grandpa things, you'll think Foxy Grandpa about to-morrow morning. I wonder what test we'll have first; probably arithmetic because I just do naturally hate it. Who cares how much a cistern so big holds or how long it is going to take to fill it at so much per minute! We'll never dig cisterns for a living, though you may if you don't get to work and brighten up your intellect. Now here's a problem: 'If a sailor on deck walks five miles an hour, what is the rate of momentum?' Who cares about anything like that, and anyway any sailor would be a fool that would do it. I'm not going to figure on anything so silly.

"Here's another: 'The shadow of a man six feet tall is eight feet, six inches; another man's shadow is seven feet, nine inches. How tall is the latter?' wouldn't a person be foolish to spend his life figuring on shadows? They are such uncertain things. Everybody knows that shadows aren't anything to count on. It's like the baby catching sunbeams. I can't see the wisdom of getting prematurely gray over such things as that. Now listen to this! 'When green hams—' Whoever heard of green hams. Did you, Dick Moxie? Did anybody? They're always yellow till you undo them and then they're brown. I guess the man that wrote this old arithmetic was green himself. Dick Moxie, what is a concrete number? I'll bet you can't say the table of apothecaries' weight.

'20 grains	1 scruple,
3 scruples	1 dram,
8 drams	1 ounce,
12 ounces	1 pound.'

Why do they call it apothecaries', anyhow? I suppose it was the hardest word they could think of.

What are teachers for anyhow, but to invent things that people can't answer. They are our modern instruments of torture. Name the modifications of the verb! Mode—mode—what is mode? Dick Moxie, I'll bet you can't tell what the Omnibus Bill was. Who fought at Antietam? Name the generals. I don't even know where Antietam was, do you? There's so many things. Name the Presidents in their order! Dick Moxie, you can't. They won't ask a thing about Foxy Grandpa. You'd better get to digging, young man. Can't you manage to chew without smacking so? It isn't manners. It's horrid. I'd be a pig and done with.—And get your feet down, great muddy things! You're kicking right into mother's good table cover. There now! you choked. I'm glad you did. Honest Dick, *is* that the last chew you've got? Are you *sure?* I believe I could study better if I had some gum. It sort of keeps a person in motion. Oh, I don't see what's the use of having tests anyway. They don't help us any. They only just make us miserable."

Marjorie looked serious the next morning as the papers were being handed around. She scribbled at the answers desperately. There wasn't any use fussing. Arithmetic was a sort of a lottery; maybe you got it and maybe you didn't; anyhow, there wasn't any use gnawing your lead pencil to the roots. The more she thought, the worse the men who could do a certain piece of work in a certain time and the flag pole that cast a shadow so long got mixed up in her mind. Somewhere she had seen that example about the man, or was it horses; anyway the answer was eight days—or wasn't it! Dear! Something was buzzing in her head. She couldn't think. She put both hands over her ears and drummed with them as if to recall her scattered senses. Well, it didn't matter, if she knew them, she knew them; if she didn't, she didn't. That's all there was of it. And if she ever needed to use such things she would get an adding machine, yes, and a subtracting machine, and a multiplying machine, and a dividing machine. Why not! Did they make them, and if they didn't, why didn't they. Did anybody really understand cube root anyhow! Did the man who invented it! Of course he didn't. Who could! Such a lot of figures all jumbled together. Of course she wouldn't stand anything. She never did in arithmetic. Arithmetic was here, and spelling was coming. Marjorie laid her head helplessly on the desk between intervals. She tried to think how to spell fuchsia. Was it f-u-s-c-h-i-a or f-u-c-h-c-i-a. She couldn't remember for the life of her.

Just before the gong sounded Professor Stoddard came down the aisle in response to a boy's uplifted hand. The boy sat opposite Marjorie. It was some difficult problem that needed an explanation, and as he stooped to the task the professor laid his own book on Marjorie's desk. It was a speller. From it fluttered a tiny white slip of paper; fluttered and fell, writing uppermost, at Marjorie's feet. It held her vision like a magnet —One word below another, closely written, filling the page.—Long, difficult words—test words—like a flash the thought came. She began to spell them out—the first, "rheumatism," the next, "necessary." She saw the professor pick up his book and go, but she did not lift her voice to tell him of the fallen slip. Her cheeks flamed up with a sudden sense of guilt, still her eyes went on deciphering the third word, "gymnastics." She put her foot on it desperately, still it did not cover the fourth nor the fifth, "asphyxia." Oh, she never could have spelled that, nor "ptomaine." With a sudden sinking qualm she stooped and picked the thing up. Oh, they were terrible words, terrible!—Worse than her wildest imaginations.—"Subterranean" and "esophagus," yes and "carbonaceous" and "psychological." She never, never, could have spelled them, never.

Through all the recess she sat and studied with the slip hidden in the cover of her geography. Belinda Barks came and leaned over the desk confidentially; but Marjorie quelled her enthusiasm with one look. Such words, twenty of them, and each one worse than the last. Through them once, twice, three times. She began to feel a spark of reviving confidence. She felt that Professor Stoddard's eyes were upon her curiously, still she kept on and on desperately, till the last moment of time had been consumed. Dick on the other side of the room had his spelling book out and was digging away like mad. The little of his cheek and ear that showed were crimson with exertion. Marjorie's heart smote her with a mighty qualm. Dear faithful Dick! and he couldn't spell a one of them; he just couldn't. Neither could she if she were honest; but she wasn't. She was a horrible fraud. It was cheating. It was nothing short of *stealing*. Professor Stoddard had not meant them for her. No doubt she would be promptly expelled if the truth were known. She knew some girls who cheated at the examinations. They wrote history dates and names on their shirt-waist sleeves, and threw paper wads for help; but she had never been one of these. She had never thought to stoop so low; but now she was no better than the worst of them. If they could only see through the cover of her geography.

When the return gong sounded she had every word on her tongue's end from "rheumatism" down to "protoplasm," which was the last.

Overwhelmed with shame she carried her dog-eared speller up to the professor's desk with the others. This was one of the rules of the school that whenever a test was taken all the text-books upon the subject were carried to the rostrum. It was supposed to remove any temptation toward dishonesty; but it didn't. Incapacity itself was a goad to dishonesty. The very fact that one ought to know and one didn't. The disgrace of discovered ignorance. The unlauded virtue of common honesty. The coveted and delicious bit of praise at the end of a creditable showing, no matter how won.

Marjorie's cheeks burned and her head drooped guiltily as she drew out her white paper and made ready to write. A clean page to be blotted with such a sin. It seemed as though every one was looking at her. Every one knew. They could look right through down to her wicked heart.

Then Professor Stoddard cleared his throat and began, "Guinea." Marjorie's head went up in a sudden terrified alarm. Had she overlooked one. The next, "Phoenix." Oh, oh! Surely he must be making some mistake. Her mind seemed to have been swept a blank by one fell stroke. "Raisins." Oh, raisins, raisins! Surely she knew how to spell raisins! Her hand seemed to be writing without any assistance from her dazed mind. "Phalanges." Oh, she had never studied that!—nor the next, nor the next. She had studied the wrong words. Oh, she had! She looked miserably over to Dick, who was pegging away with dogged determination, his contrary lock sticking stubbornly at angles. No doubt he would stand one hundred. *She* would fail. She ought to. It would serve her right.

"Maneuvers." She was sure to miss that one. Oh, how did one make the middle of it? Was it e-u or just u, or what? She twisted her hair till the ribbon came off and her forehead was puckered into a knot.

"One hundred! Oh, Dick! I didn't!" Marjorie snatched at the papers in Dick's hand. Two days had passed and they were getting their returns. "Give me mine, quick! Are you *sure* it had my name on the back? 'Marjorie Moxie,' that's me. Oh, Dick! you're fooling. I failed." She hesitated for one miserable moment before she undid the fold. "Oh, you didn't! It is mine! One hundred! How could I?" Her face flashed into radiance. "What will father say? Perfect! Think of it!" For a moment she reveled in the delicious sensation of pride.

"I didn't do so very bad myself. Got ninety-eight. Fell down on 'geyser'." Dick displayed his own standing with a certain mild complacency. "Ninety-eight isn't so worse."

But Marjorie's light had gone out. She sank down in a little withered heap on the school-ground walk. She was truly contrite now. She had done better than Dick and Dick was the faithful one. Dick deserved it. If she had been honest; but she hadn't. She rubbed her cheek against his sleeve in abject humiliation.

Poor Dick! If she could only transfer to him the numbers, and the honor. Praise wouldn't be sweet unless it had been honestly earned. How could she ever sit and feel Father Moxie stroking her hair and bear him saying nice things while Dick took second place. She would rather it had been a zero; then she could have at least stopped deceiving folks and been honest from then on; now there wasn't anything to do but to go right on being something that she wasn't. She wanted to spell the words, she could even cheat to do that, but she didn't want one hundred on her paper unless she had earned it. Conscience was a funny thing. One never knew until afterwards just how one was going to feel about it.

She crept closer to Dick. There was a threadbare edge to his sleeve and she picked at the ravelings for an excuse to get hold of his hand and keep it.

"If there was something—Oh, Dick!" At last conscience was paramount and insisted that she make amends. "If you had meant to do something very wicked and hadn't done it, but if you thought you had, and you wanted to do it, and did it a-purpose, only you didn't because it was a mistake,—if you did something too terrible for anything, and really deserved something terrible to happen to you and something good did instead, what would you think you ought to do about it?"

"I'd think you ought to be mightly grateful." Dick adjusted the matter promptly. "Why, what terrible thing have you done, Sis?" He pulled her serious face around and looked in it. "Bet I know! Bet you bit on that same old bait, spelling list, didn't you? Professor Stoddard's been scattering them all over the schoolhouse, I guess. I got one, and Noel Pixley got one, and—"

"Did you? Oh, Dick! Did it commence with 'rheumatism'? Did you study it?" Marjorie's hands came together in commiseration.

"Course. And so did Thadd Visaw and Gus Jones and a dozen other fellows. Don't look so down in the mouth. You're not alone in the boat. I'll bet there isn't a one of the two dozen that picked up the slips trotted it up to Professor with their eyes shut. If he was looking for an honest student I don't believe he found a one."

"No, he didn't." Marjorie's tones were full of solemn tragedy. "It gives us something to think about. It teaches us a lesson."

"Yes, to look out for sucker bait. They won't catch me again with that old worm."

"And something else," Marjorie persisted. "Didn't it give you a feeling in here—cheating, I mean? And, oh Dick, we could have spelled them anyhow! It's always that way, isn't it, Dick? If one only has confidence in oneself, one doesn't need to cheat. And the only thing that will make a person ignore a thing like that is to feel that we don't need it. I always knew I had it in me; but I never knew before how I could get above it. I hope every slip Professor Stoddard threw out not only located a thief but kept right on till it found the honest spot inside. Oh, do you suppose there is anybody in the world, Dick, who cheats just because they want to cheat?"

CHAPTER XII

DEVELOPING DICK'S TALENT

"I wonder why they spend so much time trying to make people smart when so few people are!"

"I suppose those are the rivers and mountains you are putting in now. Those two round holes up yonder are lakes, aren't they, Sis?"

"They're eyes, you goose. This isn't a map of South America; this is Professor Stoddard's picture. Doesn't it look exactly like him?" She held it at arm's length for inspection. "You know what a habit he has of rolling one eye? Well, isn't that it to a T? I've exaggerated his nose, of course. One always does in caricatures, and this is a caricature. I pride myself it maintains all the characteristic features. What are characteristic features?—Eyes, nose, mouth and ears? Well, he has them all good and plenty. I saw to that, especially the mouth. Nature wasn't at all stingy with Professor Stoddard in the matter of a mouth. He needs a large one. A small one would get torn at the corners using such large words. His eyes are poppy; these are, only poppier. He has exactly three wrinkles running like highways across the broad and open stretches of his brow. I've counted them many a time, prospecting upon his family. Isn't that a perfect dear of a wart?—I never knew that I could draw a wart before.—And those cute little crow's feet in the corners of his eyes! I've exaggerated them a little; but if there's anything cute about a body, in a caricature you make it cuter,—if it's pretty much, you make it more so. I call that pompadour a work of art. It looks exactly like a stubble field, and very invisibly through it, like a last year's ground-bird's nest, you discern Professor Stoddard's pet wen. I touched upon this point very delicately you see! because it is a tender one. Only a few of us girls who have leaned over the banisters and seen him coming up, know about it. That's why he combs his hair pompadour. He prides himself nobody knows. Verily, pride goeth about puffed up. Is that Scripture, Dick? I'm not up on Scripture as I should be. Some day I mean to spend a great deal of time studying the Bible. I feel that it will do me good. Haven't I got his ducky little collar and rusty tie identical? I wonder if that's the only tie he ever had? Nobody ever saw him in any other. It's positively shiny; but of course I can't put that in the picture. I could make his trousers baggy at the knees though, and put stomach wrinkles in his vest; that is, I could if it was a full-length picture, but it isn't, it's a bust. Perhaps when I grow up I shall decide to be an artist. I have a leaning in that direction.

Don't you think I have, Dick? Wouldn't it be lovely to have people coming to sit for their portraits?

"There now, Professor Stoddard! When I put a little shading around to make you stand out to my notion, you'll be done; and a very fine-looking fellow you are, if you have got a wart on your chin. What's that Riley says about the man in the moon:

> 'There's a boil on his ear and a corn on his chin,
> He says it's a dimple but dimples stick in;
> Yet it may be a dimple turned over you know!
> Whang! Ho! Why certainly so!
> It may be a dimple turned over you know!'

Dick Moxie, give me a sheet of your paper! You've got a dozen and I didn't have but one."

"Well! one would have been enough if you hadn't wasted it drawing pictures. I wish you'd stop daubing ink all over the table. What are you doing?"

"Picking flies out of the ink bottle; what do you suppose! I s'pose you'd leave them to drown. Mean thing! Make such a fuss because you get a little ink on your finger! How'd you like to drown in an ink bottle? I've been fishing after that one for an hour. See! he can't hardly crawl. I wonder how it would feel to be pickled in ink. Besides, Dick Moxie, that paper isn't wasted. Nothing is ever wasted that is used for the development of real genius. I call the making of a picture like that far more praiseworthy than an old copied map without a bit of originality in it. And anyhow that paper's as much mine as yours. Father bought it. And I did start the map of South America. I meant it for that till I got down as far as his nose; then I saw the resemblance. It wouldn't have made South America anyhow, for I forgot to put on the Isthmus of Panama. I guess one sheet of paper won't kill anybody. Besides, it's a nice picture, you know it is, yourself. You're just jealous because you didn't do it. Give me half this minute before I tell father! There! Now we'll see who beats for all you're so swift on foot. Huh! You have only got to the mouth of the Amazon. I'll be across it before you can say Jack Robison." She folded the caricature and thrust it into the stand drawer, straightway forgetting all about it.

Dick toiled laboriously, putting in rivers and principal cities, long after she was gone. Drawing was a serious and trying procedure with him, and his sheet showed signs of much painstaking erasing and filling in. Out on the lawn he could hear Marjorie racing from the very delight of being out of doors. Now she was sliding on the porch banister, now she was tossing one of the croquet balls. He could hear her singing:

"Willy—O—Willy—O!
Harness your filly—O,"

at the top of her voice. Her tasks were all over and there was still an hour before dark. Marjorie could do a lot of things in an hour. Now she was opening the shed for her daily visit with the Appetite. He heard the Appetite's delightful yelp of greeting, then the shed door slammed and all was still.

Sitting flat on the floor with her cheek buried in shaggy fur, Marjorie was telling all the experiences of the day, in an effort to break up the dull monotony of the Appetite's existence.

"—And we might have taken a lovely, lovely walk in the park if it hadn't been for that old map. Maps are horrible things. I don't see any sense in drawing maps, though I did enjoy beating Dick. Poor dear! he will never be an artist, though he has the patience of Job. I am sure it would take a miracle to develop any sort of artistic talent in Dick, and isn't it strange he loves above all things to draw? Artists are born, not made. I've read that; but if you go to school you have to draw a map whether you're an artist or not, and it doesn't matter the least in the world whether it looks more like an old setting hen than it does like South America. And you have to speak a piece whether you're an elocutionist or not, even if your voice sounds like a cracked teakettle. I always feel sorry for Lucinda Mugg when she gets up to speak. Her stockings are so long and are never mates, and she always mumbles through her piece so dejectedly, and I know she's thinking more about whether her petticoat shows than she is about what she is saying. I wonder why they spend so much time trying to make people smart when so few people are!

"Supposing I should try to make you into a lovely French poodle with curly ears! Your ears are lovely and long and so silky, I love to put my cheek against them; but they aren't curly, not the least little bit in the world. I wonder how you would look with curly ears! I'm going to bring Jane's curling iron and see. Will you sit real still like a lovely lady and be made up? Will you, if I bring a looking glass and a beautiful blue ribbon to tie on your collar? You can be the grand Duchess So-and-So, and I shall be your artistic French maid, Lizette. I shall fix you up scrumptious. See if I don't!" She sped away, and in a moment was back with the promised things.

"Now look real pleasant," she urged; "—and you mustn't get nervous if the iron is a little warm. I shall try not to burn you. You will look simply charming, and when we sail down the avenue all the dogs will take off their hats and make a big bow. Now there is one curl done already, and it's a dear. Your hair is really beautiful, a lovely golden brown, if it was only curly so people could appreciate it. You ought to be willing to be made up every day if it only improves your appearance, for really you will never be courted for your beauty. Your nose is too long and you are too melancholy. I wonder why you are. You really ought to be cheerful. Some people pay a great deal of money to be fixed up like this, and here you are getting it for nothing. I couldn't make nicer curls if I was making them for the Queen of Sheba. You hold still! I didn't burn you. I had the comb right behind the curling iron and couldn't. Here, Doggie! Here, Doggie!" She coaxed the Appetite out from behind Father Moxie's tool chest, where she had taken refuge.

"Of course, it isn't exactly what you might call pleasant. Most things aren't, that is, not until we get them done and see how perfectly lovely they are going to look. Think of me when Jane gets at me! Almost every day I have to go through this, and yet you aren't willing to do it once; besides I'm not going to twist it up when I get through till your poor ears are all goose pimply. That's what Jane does for a finishing touch. Supposing it was Jane had hold of you instead of me. Do you know what she'd do with you if you kept on squirming like that? She'd burn you, that's what she'd do. I will. What are you whining about? Can't you have a little patience? Come now! Don't you want to be the Duchess of So-and-So and have curls and a beautiful blue ribbon? Just look in the glass and see how lovely you are already. Three beautiful curls on one ear and none on the other. Now!—Real still!—It won't take but a minute—It—"

But the Appetite had bolted for a crack of light in the shed door, the curling iron, wrenched from Marjorie's hand, swinging from one ear. She let a blood-curdling cry from her as she went, for the comb that was to have protected her had jingled to the floor. Marjorie sprang to the rescue, but too late, the Appetite was already making for the commons, howling as she went. She seemed a dull yellow streak in the distance. Her cries roused all the boys in the neighborhood and they joined in the chase.

"Catch her! Catch her!" Marjorie shouted to them, but in the din no one could hear. Some men came out and waved their arms and cried, "Mad dog! Mad dog!" and women and children scattered in every direction.

"Oh, she isn't mad!" Marjorie screamed. "It's a curling iron! I burned her. Oh, stop her! Stop her! There isn't a thing the matter of her except one ear and that's probably burned off by now. Don't you smell it singeing? Stop her! I say, stop her!" But if any one heard they did not heed. The crowd was a mob now, armed with clubs. The Appetite was blocks ahead in a cloud of dust. Around the corner she went. Marjorie caught one glimpse. Oh, she was heading for home! She was! She ran through to Green Street. Yes, there she was. She had shaken the curling iron loose, and was slacking speed. Marjorie began to whistle, softly, seductively—a whistle that promised all sorts of juicy bones and delicious scraps. The Appetite had never been known to turn a deaf ear to such suggestions. She came now with the frightened, sneaky wag of a beggar, and cowered at her mistress' feet. Marjorie slipped a hand through her collar and turned to face the approaching mob. It was mostly boys ahead. She stamped her foot at them passionately.

"What do you mean by scaring a poor dog to death? As if it wasn't torment enough to have a hot curling iron fast in your ear without having a lot of great hoodlum boys howling at you! You go right straight home! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. I guess if your ear was burned like that you'd have a right to be mad; anybody would.

"Never mind, you poor dear!" She consoled the Appetite all the way home. "You shall have some of mother's lovely cold cream on it, and all, every bit, of my share of the delicious pressed chicken we are going to have for supper. And anyhow it's nicer to be just plain dog than to be any Duchess So-and-So no matter how curly their ears are."

The next morning the second gong had sounded before Dick and Marjorie had set out for school. Marjorie's ribbons were gone, and her school bag couldn't be found, her lead pencil had to be sharpened, and worst of all she couldn't find her map. She looked through the papers on the library table and in the dictionary, and ran through the geography for the dozenth time. She even took it by the covers and swung it so that all the loose leaves fell out.

"I put mine where I knew where it was," Dick boasted.

"So did I; but 'tisn't there. Somebody's had it. A body never can find anything when you've been rummaging round. Oh, dear! there's just ten minutes more. Why don't you help me find it instead of standing there like a stodden bottle! I always help you. Oh, never mind! It's too late now," as Dick made a move in her direction. "I've found it at last, horrid thing!" She lifted up the corner of the stand cover and disclosed it, neatly folded. She hurriedly scribbled her name across the corner.

"Now hurry! Have you got your physiology? Where's my handkerchief!" They made a race for it down the front walk.

All the maps were to be left at the Professor's desk. One student from the number was to be chosen to copy his work on the board to remain on until another year. It was considered an honorable distinction to be chosen for this performance. Marjorie was dumfounded to hear Dick's name called, but no more so than Dick himself. He went forward slowly, overcome with confusion. There was a twinkle in Professor Stoddard's eye as he handed out the map. "Pretty well done, young man," he praised. I think the school will enjoy seeing your work. Please copy it as nearly as possible, I should like to see it on the board just as you have it here. Right over there where all the school can see!" He motioned to a prominent blackboard.

Dick took his place with qualms of misgivings. It had taken him hours to do the map at home, and no one realized better than he its deficiencies. He saw his humiliation as he erased and remodeled and erased again. Then he unfolded the paper and stood looking down upon it with a horrified countenance. It was the caricature. Across the back of the sheet was his name written in bold letters. In small monogram in the corner, M.M.M., but the professor had not noticed that. For a moment he stood overwhelmed. He might take it to the professor and beg to explain; but what could he say, and then the small unobserved monogram would be discovered. "Marjorie May Moxie," who else bore those initials? For only a moment he stood hesitating, then he lifted his hand and began to draw.

Marjorie was watching him. Was Dick going to fail? Couldn't he even copy the poor little map that looked more like a hen than South America? Yes. The crayon was commencing to move—slowly, very slowly—along the line of Venezuela—along the Guianas; but such a line. Where was Lake Maracaibo! What was that mountain! Oh! Oh! It wasn't! It was! —A pompadour—a wen—Oh! Oh! Oh! an ear—Professor Stoddard's caricature—Her's —not Dick's—Horror wiped all else from her face. —Poppy eyes—and the three wrinkles,—Oh, and such a wart!

Dick labored painstakingly to reproduce his copy. Never had he made such an effort. His face was scarlet, but he kept it close to the board. Only his ears, like two flaming poppies, stood out for all to behold, announcing his shame. He made the nose, sparing nothing from its ludicrousness. He placed the cute little crow's feet in the corner of the eyes. Marjorie buried her face in her sleeves. Every one was laughing now and nudging his seatmate. Whispers ran round the schoolroom. Poor, poor Dick! Marjorie peeped out to see if he was dying of shame; then she watched him with fascinated eyes. He had folded the copy and put it in his pocket and was adding the finishing touches. Here a line and there a shadow. Stepping off now to see the effect; then going back and adding some more shadows. Every moment it grew more lifelike. One by one the school stopped laughing and began to watch him, too. When school was out they gathered around to congratulate him.

"Thought 'twas only a joke at first, you know, old fellow, but say, it's fine. When did you learn to be an artist, Dick?"

"I've just had my first lesson," Dick informed them.

"Nothing like trying, you know. Some day perhaps I shall be a famous artist, thanks to my sister Marjorie." He cast a sly grimace at her where she stood, flushed and waiting.

"Don't take it too hard, Sis!" he whispered as he linked arms with her in the hall. "Really, I didn't mind after I got started; and perhaps, but for you, one of the bright lights might have been hidden under a bushel."

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNFORESEEN EXTRAVAGANCE

"Does anything in the world look better than pink lemonade on the Fourth of July?"

"Ten and five are fifteen and one, two, three, four, five—twenty cents. How much have you got, Dick?"

"Guess I'm about all in. I'd forgot all about the Fourth of July." Dick turned his pockets wrong side out. Let's see! Five, six, seven, and here's a dime. Billy Leasor owes me a quarter. Guess I can scare up a half a dollar."

"Oh, Dick! then if you've got so much you can buy the firecrackers. I want five cents for lemonade and an ice-cream cornucopia. I love those things. They always sell them if there's a celebration. That only leaves me two rides on the merry-go-round. I can't spend a cent for fireworks, honest I can't. And I don't see how I ever can live with just two rides and one lemonade. I don't, really—and there's popcorn and peanuts and taffy—pink—I've always bought pink taffy on the Fourth of July. I need a quarter more. I think perhaps I could get along with a quarter more, don't you, Dick? Say three rides, one of them to be 'ocean wave.' I'm going to ride one of the horses this time. Last year mother made me sit in a seat; but I'm bigger this year, and there isn't the least danger in the world of falling off, is there? It looks so grand to sit up there with your hair flying out behind. I know I should love to, it would give me such delicious creepy sensations.

"Oh, do you s'pose they'll have a Ferris wheel, Dick? I should dearly love above all things to ride in a Ferris wheel. If they have one I believe I would rather go without the cornucopia. After all it is foolish to spend money for such things, they are so soon over—the pleasure, I mean. Even an ice-cream cornucopia. Think how soon it melts! It is a terrible waste, and nothing lasts but the headache. I always think so when I am home; but when I get there somehow I forget all about it. Everything looks so good. Does anything in the world look better, Dick, than pink lemonade on the Fourth of July?—anything unless it's pink taffy, yards and yards of it on a platter? Wouldn't it be lovely to be able to buy a whole platter at once? Wouldn't you love to be the taffy man? Which do you think lasts longest, Dick, a ride or an ice-cream cornucopia? I don't know, but I think that a ride makes the most impression while it lasts. Does it give you that funny feeling in the pit of your stomach? I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll spend the rest on rides. I shan't have such an appetite then. I shan't mind not being able to buy things. It's a sickish feeling, but it's lovely. Oh! isn't it wretched to be poor, Dick?"

"I can get two bunches of firecrackers for a nickel," Dick figured. "I'll get three Roman candles. We ought to have at least six rockets. Rockets are best of all; but I want a pocket full of torpedoes to take down town, and a loaded cane."

"I'd love to have one of those streaked, red, white, and blue canes and a squawker," Marjorie suggested. "Did you ever see a nigger baby fast to a rubber string, Dick? You can throw them ever so far and they bound back. They're nice and so is a Happy Hooligan that runs out his tongue. I don't know whether I'd rather have a Hooligan or a rubber pig, one of those that aren't anything until you blow them up and then—they squeal. Oh, I'd dearly love to have one of those, they're the dearest little pink things! Do you remember, Dick Moxie, when we used to get nigger-baby chewing gum? Oh, I wonder why they don't sell that kind now. They had a rubber string too. You could play with them a long time and then you could chew them, so you see they were profitable. I played with one a whole week once before I chewed him; made a little dress for him and everything. I always did regret chewing him, he was such a dear. Oh, whatever else we have, Dick, we must have some pin wheels! It's such fun to pin them to the gate."

"Well, I guess we'd better draw the line right there. I've got my pile about counted out. There might be some side shows a fellow'd want to get into. There's going to be a balloon ascension."

"Oh, is there? Goody! Goody! I dearly love to see them. I hope it'll be a lady. They're so much more graceful. A man is all legs that soon fade into nothing. I like a lady with a short spangled skirt on—silver spangles. They look ever so much better. If I were going to ascend I believe I should wear a black velvet dress with a train all spangled with stars and a silver crown on my head. The train would sweep out beautifully into the air and could be seen miles and miles."

"Huh! you might make a graceful ascent, but how about the descent!" Dick retorted.

"Why not?" Marjorie questioned innocently.

"Well, you try coming down out of the sky with forty yards of petticoat and see what luck you have!" was all the information Dick would proffer.

"Well, I could all right," Marjorie protested. "Anyhow I believe I should love to be an argonaut. What is it you call them, Dick? The feelings would be creepier even than riding a merry-go-round. It must cause a terrible sensation when one first commences to come down. I know I should laugh."

"I guess you would all right, out of the wrong corner of your mouth," Dick prophesied. "There, mother is calling you, Sis. You'd better skidaddle! I'll bet you never touched your dishes and here you are out here sozzling around."

"I'd like to know if I didn't. I'd like to know what business you've got calling them *my* dishes. Did I dirty any more of them than you did, Dick Moxie? Say! Didn't you just come in and get a knife to pry out your old tacks, one of mother's best silver ones, too, and didn't you take one of the best china cups to make soap bubbles in? You're always dirtying dishes and I have to wash them. They're mine when I have to wash them, and they're somebody else's when I break them. 'Tain't fair. I don't see why you can't wash them once in a while yourself when you're always dirtying them. I'll be glad when folks eat on chips. I don't see any sense in forever washing dishes."

"If you'd dust around a little it wouldn't be forever," Dick suggested.

"I guess I dust about as much as you do, lazybones. I'd sit there all day long and tinker with an old baseball cover if I were you. You're always sicking somebody on to do something you wouldn't do yourself," Marjorie retorted, walking backward along the path, not to miss a return shot. "Come in and wipe them, won't you?" She paused on the step. "Please, pretty please." But Dick remained obdurate.

"I think it's time you got at them," Jane reproached, as she came through the kitchen after the dustpan and Marjorie was just tying on her rubber apron. "I should have thought you would have hustled around this time if you mean to go."

"Don't think!" Marjorie advised smartly. "It's a waste of time."

"We were to have started at two. Mother's busy sewing the sleeve in your white dress and lengthening the hem. Do you even know you almost ruined that dress when you wore it the last day of school! Mother oughtn't to have let you wear it."

"I s'pose not. I ought to have gone naked. I'd like to know who could help tearing the sleeve out of anything that was four miles too small—not if they breathed. I s'pose you'd like to have me stop breathing, wouldn't you? Well, I won't, not if everything tears. I wish it would, then I could get a full breath. I haven't had one in—in *years*. Your clothes are all a-plenty big for you, Jane Ann Moxie. You don't have to wear left-overs." She fired a parting reproach at Jane's retreating figure.

The dishes, once gotten at, were a small consideration. Marjorie went through them like a whirlwind. One upon another they rattled together merrily on to the shelf, stacks of them at a time. Marjorie never waited to straighten them. Too much was at issue to waste time straightening dishes. She was upstairs in a jiffy rummaging through the closet for her best shoes. Only one of them seemed to be in evidence. Something was always sure to be lost when people were in a particular hurry. She scattered boxes and bundles to right and left, then hobbled to the head of the stairs.

"Jane! Oh, Jane!" she called down impatiently. "What did you do with my shoe? There isn't but one to be found anywhere, and I know they both set just inside the closet door, side by side. Nobody ever can find anything after you sweep. Both my best stockings were in them. *Jane!* Do you hear? Where's my shoe? I'm not going to stand round here on one foot all day."

"If you'd do more thinking you wouldn't have to ask questions," Jane reproved her from below. "I suppose you don't remember firing it into the paper basket the other night! It's a good thing there's one in the family who thinks. You ought to be more orderly. I've tried to break you of firing your shoes."

"Yes, I ought to be lots of things, but I'm not. I guess if you had been as sleepy as I was the other night, you would have fired them too. I only wonder I didn't go to bed with them on."

She went and drew the missing shoe from among the papers. But the stocking was gone. She went to the bottom searching for it. There seemed to be a dim remembrance of having torn the leg of an everyday stocking and of substituting a best one without any advice from mother. No doubt it was down in the clothes hamper, dirty. Something always *was* somewhere. Probably now she would have to go with one stocking.

She fished a handful of things from the closet and came out to the light to examine them. There was one. It seemed a little large; but then it took almost as large stockings for her as it did for Jane. To be sure, she had found it near Jane's shoes; but then if it had been Jane's it should have been inside. That was the place for stockings, and anyhow in such an orderly person as Jane. She held it up to the one she had on. Yes, it matched. It was hers, or if it wasn't—Jane had bushels of stockings. She never had but one pair and sometimes she didn't have them. It looked all right. She smoothed her slim legs complacently. When Jane came up she was polishing her shoes, sitting flat on the floor with her sleek stockinged feet before her. "What's the reason they don't shine! I'm sure I scrub them hard enough," she complained.

"You mustn't dig into the blacking like that, Marjorie. Mother doesn't allow it; besides it spoils your shoes. Stop now, I said! Mother! Marjorie's digging the box of blacking all up."

"I'm not either. I haven't used but just a little mite. I'd like to know how anybody's going to black shoes without blacking! I didn't dig that great hole, so now! Dick did it. I get blamed for everything, if there's a hole that oughtn't to be, or if there isn't a hole that ought to be. It's nice to have some one to lay things to. I'd like to see you make 'em shine if you didn't use any more blacking than I did. Dick and I are going on ahead. We're not going to wait for you slow pokes. I'm ready now as soon as mother ties this ribbon on my hair and buttons my dress. Oh, Jane! can't I wear your crescent pin? I haven't got a thing. You've got lots of jewelry. I never have any."

"I wouldn't either if I lost something every time I turned around. Come here and let me pin it then, and don't you dare to touch it till you get home. I said when you lost the ring I'd never let you wear anything again. I ought not to."

"I won't touch it, Jane; honest, cross my heart! Oh, where's my little flag? I'm going to pin that on my shoulder. There! Don't I look patriotic?"

"Be careful now, children," Mother Moxie called from the bedroom window. "Don't get too close to anything, and keep out of the jam! You might get hurt."

"Somebody might swallow one of your tootsy-wootsy-teenty-weenty-wupsies. We'll be careful, mother," Marjorie called over her shoulder.

The streets were indeed festive with gay Fourth of July crowds, already gathered. Streamers of national bunting sailed out of the windows and decorated store fronts. Every house in town was celebrating. Every nook and cranny was filled with booths; the vacant lots swarmed with attractions of all sorts. Over the commons an imposing trapeze had been suspended and already there was a gleam of scarlet tights and silver spangles mid-air. Marjorie squeezed Dick's arm appreciatively.

"What shall we do first, Dick? Let's—let's eat something! I feel like it, don't you? Where are the cornucopias, I wonder! Where is the taffy man! Oh, here's some crackerjack! Let's get that—a box between us! Crackerjack is so—so satisfying. Oh! see that big crowd on the corner! I wonder what it is. Let's go over!"

"Right this way is where you see the greatest sight on earth. A wild girl from the jungles of Africa, half beast and half human. Come right along! Only ten cents shows you this wonderful sight! Worth more than all other side shows! Human head and a wild beast body! Hear her raving inside and tearing her long shaggy hair! Who wouldn't give a dime to behold Madgar, the wonder of the ages!"

"Oh, Dick! Isn't she terrible! terrible?" Marjorie stood spellbound before the flaming poster. "Oh! Oh! Look at her teeth. She could eat a man up just as easy. Do you suppose she does tear her hair? I should think she would tear it all out. Look at her hands! Aren't they simply *fierce?* Oh! I wouldn't see her for anything, would you, Dick?" Marjorie felt of the few coins tied in her pocket kerchief. Some one else was calling.

"Right this way is where you see the petrified man —apparently all stone, yet he lives, breathes, and speaks. Walk right in! Any one has the privilege of examining him and seeing for themselves. Feel of him if you wish! You will find his hands like blocks of solid rock. Takes ten men to lift him. Don't miss this golden opportunity to see the marvelous petrified man! Only a dime! Only a dime, ladies and gentlemen! Walk right in!" Dick dragged her reluctantly along, past lunch counters, past lemonade stands. Oh, how good it did look! And orange cider in a great big jar! She pinched Dick entreatingly.

"Shall we drink ours now?" she whispered. "Oh, Dick! we never will find such beautiful pink! Do you s'pose it's the color that makes it look so *de*-licious? Oh, Dick! we're clear past! Why not! Let's go back!" But Dick shook his head.

"You aren't going to set out to eat everything in sight, are you? I should say not. You're a regular Rube."

"I'm not. You'd like some yourself; you know you would. Oh, see those slices of watermelon! Don't they look—appetizing? It's the first watermelon I've seen this year. I dearly love watermelon, Dick.

There! The band is playing. I wonder where it is! Let's go. Oh, Dick! Hurry! Run! I'd rather hear the band than anything. We're missing it, and it's 'A Hot Time.' Oh, I dearly love to hear them play that! There isn't anything that gives me such a feeling. I—I feel like feathers—or—or thistle-down—as though I was going to blow away in a minute. Oh, Dick! does it make you feel as though you were going to blow away? Really, a band and a few flags and a little pink lemonade make a Fourth of July all by itself, don't they?"

"Just inside is where you see the smallest horse on the earth, Tetra, the toy wonder. Only three hands high, and can add, subtract, and multiply.—Knows her age and can tell you the time of day.—So tiny that a small boy's cart serves as a wagon. Do not fail to see this greatest of all marvels, the educated toy horse. Come on now! Right this way! Ho! ladies and gentlemen, to-day we are exhibiting the greatest wonder of the age—"

"Here we have to show you the fattest woman that ever lived, a veritable mountain of flesh, weighing four hundred and seventy-five pounds, measuring seventy inches around the waist. Such a sight has never before been seen. Walk right in and see for yourselves, ladies and gentlemen. Modesto, the mountain of flesh, will entertain you. She sings, talks, laughs, and dances, and is perfectly healthy. Right here is where you see Modesto, the fattest woman on earth."

"I'd love to see the horse. He must be a darling," Marjorie suggested, eyeing the tent wistfully. "How little do you s'pose he is, Dick?—as big—as—as the Appetite?" But Dick ignored her questions manfully.

"I don't want to see the fat woman. I wouldn't for anything. She must be wretched. Think of never being able to get rid of it—the fat I mean! Oh, I'm sure the petrified man must be more comfortable. Think how much there is of her to be miserable. It would take her a long time to get over it. Would you give ten cents to see her, Dick? I wouldn't."

"I should say not." Dick was scornful.

"But of course the little horse is different. Horses are cute. Did you ever see a horse who could count, Dick? What's the reason everything is ten cents? Why couldn't something be five?"

"Just because," was Dick's explanation.

Marjorie went on a few steps in silence before she resumed the subject.

"How little was the littlest horse you ever saw, Dick? Mustn't a little teenty-weenty bit of a horse look cute?" But all her efforts failed to interest Dick in small horses.

They listened to the band, and a tall man with red whiskers making a Fourth of July speech; then they went in search of the merry-go-rounds. They found a jolly one, all red, white, and blue streamers and the dearest little calliope playing a tune while you swung. Marjorie clambered up beside Dick on a prancing gray steed, delightedly. Oh, this was worth while! They were moving. Oh, they were! She tightened her hold of the bridle, and her eyes grew bright and dark with excitement. Her cheeks were red. Her hair streamed madly out behind, fluttering its crimson ribbon.

"Hang on!" Dick kept admonishing her with manly superiority. "Don't fall!"

"Oh! I could ride forever and forever," Marjorie whispered over her shoulder. "Isn't it lovely, Dick? Doesn't it make you want to laugh? Oh-h-h!" She held her breath in one long ecstatic exclamation.

"Oh, I'm so glad I didn't spend a dime to see the little horse. After all, I could only have seen that with my eyes and I can feel this clear to my toes. Feeling takes in more of you. Wouldn't it be lovely if the fat woman could ride, there'd be so much of her to enjoy it! Oh, it can't be stopping! It hasn't been going but just a minute. Do you think something is broke, Dick, or is it really *stopping?* It can't be he isn't going to let us ride any more. He isn't? Oh, Dick! I haven't had half enough."

They got off reluctantly. Three little girls stood watching them, three little girls with wistful eyes.

Marjorie spied them. She nudged Dick sympathetically.

"They didn't ride," she whispered tragically. They weren't even dressed up. Their hairs were all braided in little pigtails and tied with carpet rags. They stood watching the seats fill up again. Marjorie looked at them commiseratingly.

"Do look at them, Dick!" she entreated. "Look at their eyes! Oh, it must be awful to want to and not. I'll bet they haven't had any taffy or any lemonade or anything, and they can't ride. It must be terrible to come to the Fourth of July and not have a thing. Do you think you could bear it if it was you? You know you couldn't. I couldn't. I'm going to speak to them." She did. She put her arms around the very littlest, the one with the littlest pigtail, and the dingiest carpet rag.

"Oh, don't you little girls want to ride? Wouldn't you love to?" she questioned.

"Yes, ma'am," came in chorus from the three.

"Did you ever have a ride on a merry-go-round?"

"No, ma'am," promptly.

"Dick, did you hear that?" She turned upon her brother. "I'm going to buy them tickets, I *am*. There isn't any *buts* in the case. I'm going to, that's all there is of it. Supposing you were a little girl and had never rode. Come on, girls!" She urged them all to the stand.

"Three tickets, please," she said to the man inside. She untied her handkerchief corner and took out the three remaining nickels. "Now be sure to hang on!"

"Oh, Dick! See them! Hear them laugh! See their eyes! Isn't it worth while? Isn't it worth twice as much? Three of them and all happy at once! Oh, Dick!" Then it dawned upon her suddenly that all her money was gone, and she hadn't had a bit of pink taffy, nor a cornucopia, nor even one glass of lemonade, and she didn't have a squawker, nor a Fourth of July cane. Her face fell.

CHAPTER XIV

TAKING IN THE TRIMMINGS

"It's lovely to be perfectly satisfied, isn't it, even if it makes you miserable?"

Marjorie tucked her empty kerchief out of sight. There wasn't any use hanging on to it now. No one would rob her. She hadn't anything to be robbed of, not a cent to bless herself with. On all sides people were crying wonderful things that took money. Marjorie walked in their midst dejectedly. She couldn't even enjoy seeing them now, as she could when she had money and knew that she could buy them if she wanted to. It made such a difference. It hadn't seemed to matter at all when she knew that she could whether she did or not. She could go by just as easy, and the man who was crying things was a man who wanted her money and she wasn't at all sure that she should give it to him; but now he seemed to be a very different person, having to give or withhold all good things. He wasn't begging people to drink lemonade any more, not unless they had money. It seemed as though every one must be seeing the little empty kerchief tucked in her sleeve.

And there was a Ferris wheel. Such a perfectly delightful one. Little red, white, and blue cars going up and down all the time. People inside were shouting and waving their handkerchiefs. Oh, it must be such fun to go up! But she wasn't going. She wasn't going to do anything but mope around and see other folks having all the good times.

Yes, and an ocean wave, and dozens and dozens of squawker stands, and everybody had a cane. What dear little bows of ribbon were tied on the crooks!—And a cornucopia stand. Hundreds of people were eating cornucopias. There was a little girl over there with a red parasol who was eating one, and that boy had two, one in each hand. Oh! if she just had a bite she would be satisfied; but who would give her one? Nobody.—Not even a little weenty piece of pink taffy for the Fourth of July. Never in her life had she seen red, white, and blue taffy; but they had it, whole platters of it, just the beautifullest kind. Watermelon stands—"Oh, Dick! do you hear? They're selling it for a penny—a penny a slice.—Great big slices. Did you ever hear of selling watermelon for a penny? It's the kind I like best, just great frosted pink hearts. There, that boy's buying some. Oh, Dick! he's eating two slices!"

Anyhow it didn't cost to see the races. Dick and Marjorie were there. It was a wonder it did not cost for that too; it cost for everything else. Probably they wouldn't amount to anything, nothing ever did that was free.—Just something to keep people standing around on one foot. She was so tired of standing. Why couldn't they furnish seats if they wanted people to look at their old races?

The three little girls came and stood near. They were looking for something free, too. Something in the sight of their little tan pigtails and sagging skirts irritated Marjorie beyond endurance. She nudged Dick to move along. Of course she was glad that they had ridden, but they had done it now and ought to be satisfied. They needn't come standing around under her nose and eyes to remind her. She had enough perfectly miserable things to think of.

She would like to know what was the matter with the old races anyhow. It was two o'clock. Nobody seemed to be getting ready. She didn't believe there were going to be any. There wasn't a thing to see but a silly man tumbling over the trapeze. He couldn't do anything smart either. She didn't see as there was anything especially amusing in a man tying himself in a knot, but Dick seemed to be perfectly fascinated.

A boy elbowed through the crowd carrying a huge server loaded with glasses of lemonade. Marjorie tossed her head in haughty defiance of him, though the sight of the cool refreshing beverage added to her misery. She was choking—choking. She had been for hours. What business had they to come sticking it right under a body's nose? Couldn't people go after it if they wanted it? She ought to just snatch a glass and drink it, 'twould serve them right. She would if they came flaunting it past again. See if she didn't! His cheerful cry of "lemo, lemo, lemo, five cents a glass," rang over the grounds. Marjorie pinched Dick savagely.

"I wish he'd shut up. A body can't hear themselves think. What are they calling now? Why don't the races begin! I don't believe there's going to be one. Dick, do you s'pose we could find a *well?* I can't stand it another minute."

She dragged him reluctantly away from the entrancing trapeze performer. They crossed an open space and then climbed a little fence. A man motioned them back, but they went on heedlessly—past several sheds where things were stored—past a pen. Marjorie peeped in curiously.

"Oh! Oh, Dick! there's a pig in here and a man. He's rubbing something on him. What is it? Look, quick! Oh, Mister! Look out! you'll get it in his eyes!" She waved both her hands protestingly, but the man who was doctoring the pig only grinned sardonically over his shoulder, and went on anointing. In vain Marjorie stamped her small foot.

"There! you've got it in. I s'pose you're satisfied. Why don't you let him go! Don't you hear him squealing? What is it anyhow?"

"Soft soap," said the man, grinning harder than ever. "Bet they'll have fun catching him. It'll be interesting."

"Yes, no doubt, especially for the pig. You're a horrid, mean man. How'd you like to have soap in your eyes? Why didn't you grease him with fresh butter, or—or cold cream!"

"Yes, I suppose I ought to have perfumed him up, and tied pink ribbons on him, hadn't I?"

"But soft soap! I should think you'd be afraid 'twould take the hair off. You might at least have used lard, seeing as he has to be made into it some day. It seems awful to be full of lard for somebody else and then have to be greased with soft soap. Doesn't it seem just a little—little ungrateful?"

" 'Tain't my pig," growled the man getting sullen. "Why should I care whether the hair comes off or not? Anyhow, pigs can't feel. What you giving us!"

"Can't feel!" Marjorie was all indignation. "What's the reason they can't! They're flesh and blood, ain't they? If they can't feel what makes 'em squeal so? I don't know as being four-legged makes any difference with a body's feelings. Most two-legged pigs feel, don't they?" She gave this last retort with all the sarcasm she could summon, then she went over and whispered to Dick. "What a perfectly horrible, horrible man."

"When are the races going to commence?" Dick ventured.

"Right now, as soon as I bag this feller and take him over to the grand stand. You two going to run?"

"Hadn't thought of it," Dick returned.

"Well, it'll be a dead walk-away. There's a girl's race, a dollar up to the winner. That little spitfire can run, I'll bet a button. Here's a program tells all about it." He drew a soiled slip from his blue jumper pocket. Marjorie and Dick went over and sat down on the grass to study it.

"Fat men's race, two dollars." It was hard to get fat men to exert themselves.

"Sack race, one dollar."

"Doughnut-eating contest, fifty cents."

"Girls' race, one dollar."

"Oh, Dick! think of it! A whole dollar!" A dollar would buy lots of things. Just now she felt sadly in need of them—lemonade and cornucopias and rides. Oh, if she couldn't ride once on the Ferris wheel she would never get over it, never! Think! A Ferris wheel and an ocean wave and never to ride on either one! A whole dollar—twenty rides! Think of it!—or say, ten rides and ten something else. That would be lemonade, and a cornucopia, and a delicious slice of watermelon, and some pink taffy, and a squawker, and a cane, and some peanuts, and an orange, and then some left for some more lemonade and cornucopias if she wanted them, or perhaps watermelon. It wouldn't be anything at all to run. She could run just as easy. Didn't she run miles and miles every day just for fun? At school she could outrun all the girls. There wouldn't be any question about her beating. It wasn't as though she didn't just love to do it. And it wasn't any disgrace to run, father said so. It was healthy. If a body could run for fun, how much faster could they run for a dollar—a whole dollar, and on the Fourth of July!

The fat man's race had been called. Every one was moving forward now. Dick and Marjorie ran. There were three of them, all blowing and breathing heavily, even before they began. They had taken off their coats and hats and laid them on the grass. Once they started and were brought back. A man was shouting directions. There! They were off! My! how the dust flew! The one with the pink shirt was ahead. He seemed to roll along like a big balloon. There! Pinky was getting winded. The big stripe-shirted fellow in the middle was gaining. He pawed the air wildly with his pudgy hands and the crown of his bald head blazed scarlet in the sunshine. He was even. Now he was a pace ahead. Oh! he was beating, beating! Marjorie clapped her hands. In vain poor Pinky tried to overtake him. It was of no use. He was very fat, and his wind was gone. Anyhow, Stripey would have to treat with the two dollars, there was some satisfaction in that. He sat down helplessly on the grass and some ladies came over and fanned him.

No doubt it was his wife or his mother or maybe his sisters, and they were afraid he was going to burst. He looked as though he might. Oh, it was exciting! Everybody was congratulating the man in the striped shirt who had won the stakes. No one seemed to be paying any attention at all to the poor man who had been handicapped by bandy legs and couldn't have beaten no matter how hard he had tried. It didn't look fair, it seemed as though he needed consoling.

A man came hurrying across the commons with an armful of sacks. The sack race was coming off next. Yes, already he was tying boys into them. The band was playing, too. It was jolly. One, two, three, four, five were going. "Oh, Dick! it must be terrible, terrible, to race without any feet," Marjorie gasped as she watched them starting. They plunged, they wallowed, now one was down, now two. They were up again. One very little fellow got all tangled up and dived face foremost into the dust. When he found his equilibrium again the others were a pace ahead.

"Oh, isn't it too bad? He doesn't stand any show at all," Marjorie lamented. But the little fellow, with a sudden burst of genius, had ducked down and gathered the bungling sack up between his legs. They were very short legs. The sack made him a pair of funny little breeches. Gripping the center firmly he started to run. The canvas sack was no longer any obstacle to him. He passed the others like a flash and was away—away. The crowd burst into a loud roar of applause. Before the others could fully comprehend what it was that he had done, he had reached the goal and claimed the stakes. Marjorie danced up and down excitedly.

"Wasn't he the dearest little fellow? Wasn't he pretty? Wasn't he brave? Once he was down. I thought they were going to leave him behind. Oh, Dick! don't you love to see the littlest one win? Didn't those big, burly fellows look silly, to be beaten by a baby? They'd like to have trounced the little chap; but he's got the money. There! he's going with it. Oh, I do hope he'll have just the beautifullest time."

Then came the doughnut-eating contest. A pair of stakes were set up and a wire run from one to the other; dangling from this were five strings, each holding a doughnut, securely tied. Five boys were going to eat. They came running into the ring, full of enthusiasm, and stood in a row while the man tied their hands behind them. Some of the doughnuts had to be lowered to bring them in line with the boys' mouths, then they were ready to begin.

"How can they eat without hands?" Marjorie whispered. "Oh, Dick! See them bob!" In and out, and back and forth. How the crowd roared. It was funny. Now some one got hold of his doughnut and took a big bite; but it was away again, bobbing fantastically in the air. One fellow's doughnut broke down and had to be tied up again. A little boy in a red cotton sweater choked over a mouthful of his. The more eager and impetuous the eaters became the faster the doughnuts bobbed about. A part of one fellow's doughnut fell loose and he put his foot on it and ground it into the dust. A shout went up from the others and he was ruled out. At last one fellow finished and they led him away triumphant, his face all greased with crumbs.

Marjorie had forgotten all about the girls' race. She was shouting and laughing merrily, and thinking how funny it would be to eat a doughnut that way, and mentally planning an individual contest to be held in the barn without any audience, when she heard them calling it.

"The next thing on the program is the girls' race. One dollar will be given to the winner. All ready now for the girls' race!"

"Oh! do you hear, Dick? They're calling it. I'm going! I'm going! Hold my hat?" She thrust it upon him. "Now cheer, Dick Moxie! I'm going to win, do you hear? There isn't any maybes. I'm *going* to. Don't you dare not to believe it!"

Three other girls had already taken their places. Marjorie sized them up. Some of them seemed to be runners all right. Her heart felt a sudden qualm, but she stiffened for the effort. She was going to beat them. She meant to. No one had ever beaten her in a race before; they shouldn't now. "One, two, *Go!*" They were off at the first start. Oh, how that tall girl with the white stockings did run! One—two—three bounds and it seemed she was halfway across the field; but Marjorie was hot upon her. All the vim and energy of her nature sprang to the rescue, and the tall girl wasn't going to hold out. Oh, she wasn't! She was losing now. She felt a click from the tall girl's flying slipper. There! She could touch her. She was gaining. She was going to win. Dick was cheering. Oh, why didn't he cheer louder, louder, louder? She strained every muscle to a last supreme effort and came up abreast. The tall girl cast one apprehensive glance over her shoulder. She had been so sure of winning. Her cheeks went white, and she weakened. Marjorie saw it. Oh, she was passing her, passing! She was going to win. Dick's cheering was lost in the volley of applause. It came from every side. Hats went up in the air, and people shouted. Marjorie was intoxicated. Behind she could hear her opponent panting heavily. She couldn't go much farther. She was winded. Dick was at the grand stand waiting for her. He waved her hat in congratulation. Marjorie threw herself upon him excitedly.

"Oh, Dick! I won it! It's mine! Wasn't that girl a runner? But she couldn't beat me. I said I would win, didn't I? Did you watch me, Dick. Did I go fast? Oh, Dick! a whole dollar! Whatever will we do with so much money?" She stood looking at the prize in her hand.

"Why, spend it, of course. Why not? I guess you need it all right." He fanned her.

"Yes, I do. I guess I'll have a lemonade first." She looked all around. "Do you see any of those lemonade boys? It's funny they're never around when you want them. I could drink gallons and gallons of lemonade."

"Well, you'd better save a little room for something else."

"That's so. There are so many things. Think of spending a whole dollar just for nothing! Doesn't it seem extravagant?"

"Well, you've been wanting to long enough."

"Yes, I do want to, that's the worst of it. I want to ever and ever so much. I can hardly wait to begin. We'll see the little horse and maybe we'll see the fat woman. I wouldn't *mind* seeing her, not if I had lots and lots of money, would you, Dick? Would you care anything at all about seeing the petrified man? I believe we ought to do a few other things first; but a dollar is a great deal of money."

"I guess we'll just begin at one end and take in the trimmings," Dick suggested.

"Oh, yes! let's do. We won't skip a thing."

"No, we won't." They locked arms. Oh, it was jolly, jolly! They swung, they ate, they drank, they squawked their enthusiasm through two of the most outlandish squawkers money could buy. The boweries were open now, great green canopies under which people were dancing to lovely music. Everything smelled of new pine boards and cedar boughs and popcorn. Oh, how good fresh buttered popcorn did smell! All the men had sacks of popcorn for their ladies, and some had lovely pink and white popcorn balls. Dick got a sack for Marjorie and they sat on one of the benches side by side and ate out of it and watched the dancers. Pretty rosy girls in white dresses with bunches of old-fashioned country posies in their belts, were fanning themselves with red, white, and blue tissue-paper fans, and laughing and seeming to enjoy themselves immensely. Young fellows were getting in fancy steps between calls. The sound of their stamping feet over the rough floor was fascinating.

"Oh, Dick!" Marjorie whispered. "I wish we could dance, don't you? When we get older we will, won't we?"

"I'll be dancing with some other fellow's sister then," Dick tormented her.

At five they watched the balloon go up. At six they sat on little stools before a booth drinking a final glass of lemonade. They were too tired to stand. Marjorie had lost her crimson ribbon. Her hair was full of confetti. She had tossed a dozen packages herself. She leaned heavily against one of the tent supports and sighed. She had been having a perfectly lovely time. She slipped her hand through Dick's arm.

"I couldn't hold another bit of happiness," she confessed. "If I had another nickel I—I believe I should save it. It's lovely to be perfectly satisfied, isn't it, even if it makes you miserable? I don't know what I should have done if mother hadn't let out the band to this dress. Oh, there she is this minute! Mother! Mother!" She was into the crowd like a flash. "Wait for us! Oh, mother! Father! Jane! Here we are! Oh, where have you been? We've been looking for you all over." And so had father and mother been looking for them.

"I was afraid something had happened to you." Mother Moxie expressed her anxiety.

"And so there has. Everything happened. We've done everything that's worth doing. We've seen the tiny horse, and had two, three, four rides. Oh, the Ferris wheel was lovely, lovely! And we've eaten and eaten and eaten.. And, oh! I'm so tired!—And aren't we going home now? Wouldn't it be lovely if there were street cars to take you right to the door? I don't see how I can ever walk.—And I don't regret a thing unless it's that last slice of watermelon. It's a funny feeling, I guess it's regret; anyhow, I believe I would rather have had a cornucopia if I had had to have anything. I wonder which takes up the most room when it's melted, watermelon or a cornucopia? I've done everything I wanted except buy a toy balloon, and there's the man right over there. Oh, father! I haven't a cent. I've had a toy balloon every Fourth since I was a tiny girl and had to have it tied fast to me. Even that dear rubbery smell is a part of the Fourth of July. If I could have one—a red one—there wouldn't be a thing in the world left to wish for. It's just ten cents, and wouldn't it be lovely to go home and not be able to think of a thing that you wanted to do and didn't?" And Father Moxie acknowledged that it was worth the price.

CHAPTER XV

AN INCONSEQUENTIAL ATTACK

"It was like the measles, when a body came down with it they had to go through it. It ran a regular course."

Marjorie sprawled comfortably on the floor under Mother Moxie's bunch of drying bell peppers. The contents of the big cedar chest that had been dedicated to the keeping of dolls, lay undone before her.

"I presume the little Muggs would like you but I couldn't think of breaking my family," she said, as she placed big and little dolls in a row. "There isn't a one among you that doesn't stand for some real member, unless it is black Adeline, and in real life, my dear, you are to be the nice loving old nurse, who has rocked my whole six, from fair-haired Josephine Murl, who is so like her father, down to cute little Teddy Tums, who is the unfortunate image of his mother, poor dear. So you see, after all, you are a very important member and can't be dispensed with." She straightened out the kinky wool in black Adeline's head, and punched her flattened features into intelligence.

"You're not a very pretty black girl, Adeline, and no doubt you will not improve with age; people don't; but I mean to make you a very handsome turban out of father's red kerchief, and that will cover up the most of you; and you're good, so you shouldn't mind being homely. I don't; I would much rather be a good plain heroine than the fascinating villainess, wouldn't you?

"You see I shall some day need to know a great deal about nurses, so I must keep you to practice upon. I couldn't think of giving you up till the real Adeline Magnolia shows up, could I? Now you sit over there and take care of the baby, while I give the older children a little motherly talk.

"Of course, you've been lonesome, poor darlings, shut in this horrible chest, and along with Jane's boots, too. Horrid thing! I don't see what business she had sticking her boots in here. She certainly doesn't have much respect for my family. Your mother doesn't have the time to devote to you she would like, and I'm afraid you are not being properly brought up, with no one but old Adeline to see after you and she clear in the bottom of the chest with the last breath squeezed out of her. I certainly hope you have been good children and set as easy as you could, for she has to be in the bottom as she's rag and squashing won't hurt her, while Josephine Murl is wax and can't stand everything. I have worried constantly over that child for fear I shouldn't be able to raise her. Now there's a fresh scratch on her cheek this minute, and I know it was Jane's boot that did it.

"It is such a relief to know that my second child is hardy. It's such a care to raise puny children. Carolyn Curls is seven years old and she's never been sick a day in her life. She has suffered some with weak eyes, something seeming to ail the spring in them, but that isn't a real ailment. A great many people are cross-eyed. You little dear, you are such a comfort to your mother!" She kissed the doll in question effusively; then, to avoid any seeming partiality, she began at the head of the row and kissed down to little Teddy Tums and his black nursie.

"If precious Vivian Evangeline had lived she would be four years old next Christmas; but how could I wish her back when, of course, she is a happy little angel; and besides I still have more than I know what to do with, though I can't help feeling it is wicked to dispose of any of them. You see it is a great responsibility being a mother. Here I have three ailing children. Darlene Hope has a weak spine, and nothing will do her any good but an operation, which is apt to prove fatal. I've tried putting her in corsets but it doesn't seem to have any effect, though I'm sure she couldn't have lost very much sawdust from that wound old Appetite made in her side, for I sewed her up inside of a week, though Jane says I didn't. However, she doesn't seem to have the least stamina since. I'm sure I don't know how to handle such a listless child.

"Grace Hortense has been sorely afflicted since her infancy. I think it is St. Vitus's dance, though the doctors are unable to tell. I have had her to several and none of them can do a thing for her. I am sure that she is a great trial to her poor mother, though it only makes me love her more, for it must be terribly mortifying to have joints like hers. She can never tell how she is going to sit down. One of her feet is apt to stick right in the air; isn't that dreadful? On account of her outlandish actions she is never allowed to appear in society.

"Dear little Rose Marie is unbreakable, so they say, and I hope she is, for its nice to have a few children to romp with after the trouble of bringing up so many. Mother thinks six children a great deal too many; but I don't know. I rather think I should like one more, a boy and named for Dick, Richard Sturgis Moxie. I am so fond of Dick and he makes a good uncle to the children. Then, since precious Teddy Tums came, I like boys better than I did, and one boy is always lonesome, and I want one boy to wear curls and one to be close-cropped to please his father.

"You see, if I keep these children till I commence again with a real little Josephine Murl, I shall be quite experienced. I shall know how to braid up a row of little pigtails and get them off to school in time, and I shall know just how broken-hearted poor little Rose Marie is going to feel when precious Teddy Tums comes new. I shall—" Mother Moxie's voice came from the foot of the stairs.

"There's some one to see you, daughter." Marjorie scattered her numerous family in confusion. She confronted her mother tragically.

"Who is it, mother? Is it a man? Is it a big, ragged man with red whiskers? Is it a weazendy boy with long hair and his father's boots on? Is it Johnnie Mugg, mother?"

"Yes, it's a boy. Come down and see, daughter!"

"Well, if it's a boy it's Johnnie Mugg and he's after the things. Oh, mother! Come right up here this minute, Mother Moxie!" She pointed to one of Father Moxie's grain sacks stuffed bulgingly to the brim.

"There they are. I've been gathering things up all the morning. You know you said these things were for the poor and the Muggses are poor, you can't deny that. I promised them a long time ago, I thought you'd want me to, but I've been so busy and they have simply *haunted* me. When I saw Mrs. Mugg lugging those twins down Main Street next to naked, I thought it was time something was done. I wouldn't do such a thing. Why, even my Teddy Tums— Mother, you ought to have seen them, their poor little feet were *bare!* There are ten of them in all, counting Mr. Mugg, and he's the raggedest one of all. I am sure I don't see how he holds together. I should think when the wind blew he would flap himself to death. I don't know where these things could be put to better account, do you, mother?" She cast a furtive glance at Mother Moxie.

"What did you find to send, daughter?" Mother Moxie's tones were evasive. "You know you gave away Jane's wool sweater last year, and she needed it very badly."

"Well, I haven't got very much of Jane's, thank goodness! There's father's old coat that he hasn't worn for a dog's age, and Dick's short pants, and that old brown dress of mine, and my yellow striped leggings, and the old embroidered organ cover. I thought Mrs. Mugg might cut that up to make the twins some petticoats."

"I shall need that to finish my rug." Jane's head appeared above the landing. "I wish you would have her take that out, mother! It's hard to find enough dark red, and that is fine wool."

"I don't believe you'd better send father's yarn muffler, dear." Mother Moxie began pulling a crimson length from the sack. "You know you might not get the new one done before cold weather. His throat is so bad. And these were Richard's first pants. I don't want to give them away. He will cherish them when he is a man."

"You haven't put in my blouse waist, have you, Sis? I've been looking for it all over the house." Dick tore up the steps and besieged the bulging sack. "Yes, and there's my ear flappers! And say, Sis! Did you get my old jacket out of the hall, the one with the belt on it? I want that to wear hunting this fall."

"Yes, I did, Dick Moxie! It's in the very bottom of the sack. Fish it out, stingy thing! I hope you'll enjoy it hanging around till doomsday. Maybe you'd like to keep these old overalls and this little old shrunk-up shirt, would you? Maybe somebody might get a few rug scraps out of this old skirt of mother's, or a few quilt pieces or something or other. Maybe I'd better send the empty sack and be done with it. Mrs. Mugg might put the twins in it and tie it around their necks. There don't seem to be anything else I *can* send." Marjorie faced them with flaming indignation.

"There's that green wrapper of mother's that might have done very well for Mrs. Mugg if you hadn't taken it for the dog's bed," Jane suggested. "Oh, mother! There's my pretty little velvet jacket that isn't worn scarcely at all. It seems too bad to give that away." Jane fished it out with an injured air.

"Whew! And if there isn't my baseball pants! Glad I came up to rescue them." Dick added them to his armful of recovered belongings. "Say! I hope you were considerate enough to leave me out a change of underwear at least. Charity begins at home, you know."

"Yes, I guess it does; it begins there and ends there. I'd like to know what I *can* give, mother. They're taking out every last thing! Oh, mother!" Marjorie was on the verge of tears. "There's that cap of Dick's. He's taking out that! It'll never be of any use to him—never! I'd hate to be so stingy of my things I'd like to see them hanging around for the moths to eat while poor children went barefoot."

"I don't know as my cap's going to keep anybody's feet warm next winter; and anyhow, I always felt good in this cap." He pulled it on before her, tantalizingly.

"Well, I don't care, they can have this—and this —and this." Marjorie whisked her own belongings off the nails. "This dress of mine is as good as new; but, thank goodness, I've outgrown it. It'll just fit Mollie Mugg. I may have lots of faults, but I'm not stingy. If I had a rug that was made out of clothes that might have kept a lot of helpless little children from freezing, I wouldn't care if it did take a prize at the county fair, I should hate myself. I know I should."

She aimed a deluge at Jane, retreating through the staircase with an armful of rescued treasures. Mother Moxie went down to look up an old overcoat that had been Father Moxie's. Dick, decorated with cast-offs, pranced away tormentingly. Marjorie crammed what remained into the sack with desperate thrusts. There wasn't much—an old suit of Dick's, a dress or two that had done double service, some of her own little frayed petticoats, her old red tam of two seasons, a striped yarn mitten whose mate had been lost.

Goaded beyond endurance, she dashed down the back stairs and into her own bedroom closet, snatched an armful of faded frocks, and the blue blouse suit that came to her knees. "That's good for something, at least. I couldn't look Mrs. Mugg in the face again, after all I've said, if I gave her rags."

Had mother asked him in? She peeped out the upstairs window. Dick's last year's coat hung on the front banisters. A pretty place for it. She had left it hanging there herself on her way to the shed. She had meant to replenish the Appetite's bed, but had changed her mind. She dashed down after it. It was terribly faded. The sleeve was ripped; but it would do for Johnnie Mugg. There wasn't a thing in for Johnnie, not a thing. All the other little Muggs had been remembered. It was a good coat. There wasn't a hole in it; but Dick didn't need it. He shouldn't have it. Something white protruded from one of the pockets. It was a letter—from a girl. Oh, it was! It smelled of perfume. It wasn't sealed, or if it was it flew open just as soon as she pinched it ever so little. And she could see inside. This is what she read:

"I shall be glad to go to the party with you at Charlie Johnson's. Meet me at our home at seven o'clock sharp. GRACE DUNNING."

Grace Dunning of all girls in the world. Why, she was positively snippy. Marjorie couldn't endure her. It was Dick's coat. Yes, it was. Dick's hat and boxing glove lay on the step beside it. Marjorie snatched it and ran all the way upstairs.

The sack was all tied securely when Mother Moxie came up to help carry it down. Together they loaded it into Johnnie Mugg's two-wheeled cart, and tucked it around with Father Moxie's big coat.

"There! I guess somebody'll be warmer next winter than they were last, anyhow," she said with a sigh of satisfaction as she joined Dick where he was fitting the finishing twigs into a squirrel's cage. "Don't you s'pose they'll be grateful, Dick? Just think! There's father's good coat for Mr. Mugg! That will help to hold him together. And Dick! I put in your old brown coat for Johnnie. It was terribly old, you know, and—" Not a word about the note, however.

"My last winter's coat? Yes, it was terribly old. They're a good-for-nothing set. Old Man Mugg is shiftless. I'm not interested in paupers. Say, Sis! Has the mail man come? Was there anything for me?" Dick inquired, anxiously, getting up and closing his knife. "It must be time for him."

"Well, it is. He's come and gone. He didn't bring anything for you, either," Marjorie retorted spitefully. "I'd like to know what makes you so anxious. Who do you expect a letter from?"

"I don't know as I am anxious, and I'm not telling who I expect letters from, not to children."

"Must be you've been writing to some girl. That's what you have," as Dick maintained a sullen silence. "I'd be ashamed of myself."

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know what harm there'd be in writing to a dozen if I wanted. I guess a fellow's got a right to look at something besides his sister."

"Well, some fellow's sisters aren't asking any odds of them," Marjorie snapped hotly, the memory of the perfumed note goading her to bitterness. "If I was you I'd get married and be done with it."

"Well, I will when I get ready for all of you. Don't think I'd stop on your account," Dick snapped back, angrily. "Besides, I don't believe you know whether I got a letter or not, so there! I'm going in and see for myself."

"Go, then! and I hope you'll be satisfied!" Marjorie screamed. "'Fore I'd be love-sick!" Her tones conveyed all the contempt she felt. She twisted several brown twigs off the squirrel's cage while he was gone. She watched him coming back. He was in a beastly temper. He was whisking the heads right off mother's blue bachelor buttons along the path. Her salutation did not improve him any.

"Huh! Made a lot, didn't you? Let me see what the little tootsy dumpling said, won't you, dearest? Oh, she must be a little sweet thing! How did she begin? Let's see! 'Dearest, darlingest Dick,' it ran. 'I take my pen in hand to let you know I am well and hope this will find you the same.' No, this is it: 'Since last I saw your manly form striding away in the moonlight I have not been able to sleep a wink. I have listened but for one sound, the sound of your dear voice, bidding me come out and stroll in a garden of roses! My lips have formed but one sound, "Richard, I love thee!" Is it not enough?' " She taunted him in melodramatic tones.

"Well, I guess she's not any sillier than you are," Dick responded. "I saw the letters you wrote to Nellie Cassiday and they were a fright."

"Well, I guess I'd write lovinger to a girl than I would to a boy, so Dick Moxie! I never wrote to a boy in my life AND YOU know it! I wouldn't! I'd be ashamed to. 'Fore I'd be getting love letters from a girl! Oh, oh!" She pointed her finger at him scornfully.

"Well, who said I had! I just let you think so to see how mad you'd get. If I ever do get any letters you can bet your high-heeled boots you'll never see them, Miss!" he vowed savagely.

"Well, I shan't want to. I wouldn't waste my time over such silly stuff I'd have you know. My time is too valuable, thank your honor!"

"Oh, is it?" Dick's "Oh, is it?" was aggravating. Marjorie had meant to confess. The letter was inside her apron this minute. But she arose and shook out her small skirts haughtily.

"Well, if you don't want to be civil you needn't, grouchy. I'm not going to stay here and quarrel. I wouldn't be so sore because I didn't get a letter that I'd let everybody know how much I cared. Even if it—if it killed me, I'd try to have a little dignity. I'd like to know who you expect a letter from that you've had to inquire forty times a day for the past week. Well, you didn't get it, and I'm glad of it; anybody as mean as you are don't deserve a letter." She flounced away behind the shed and Dick heard her playing anti-over savagely. This was the very last mail, the postman had been and gone, and the invitation was for to-night. Dick worked sullenly for a while, then he followed Marjorie. She sat on an upturned potato crate with her head in her hands. Dick thought she was lonely. His heart relented.

"Want to go to a party to-night, Sis?" He broke the news abruptly. Marjorie lifted her face disconsolate enough. She had been crying. Her eyes were red. Dick put his arm around her tenderly.

"There! cheer up, little girl!" That was a delightful manly way Dick had. "I forgot all about it. There's going to be a party at Charlie Johnson's and you and I are going."

"Who—who said so?" Marjorie's lips were still quivering.

"Why, I did, didn't I?"

"But mother didn't."

"Well, she will. You want to, don't you?" he queried, peering around to see into her face.

"Y—yes." Oh, how that perfumed thing inside her apron did burn!

"Well, then, go and get your bib and tucker on. We'll start at seven sharp."

"I—I thought that you were going to stay all night with Edwin. You—you asked mother."

"I know; but I've changed my mind. A fellow can change his mind, can't he?"

"I s'pose so." Marjorie looked miserable.

"You don't act as though you wanted to go," Dick reproved her. "You aren't very appreciative I must confess, when there are hundreds of pretty girls—"

"Well, why don't you take them, then; you'd rather than to take me."

"Who said I'd rather! I always do take you, don't I?"

"Well, you wouldn't if you could get anybody else," Marjorie accused him miserably. "You know it, too, Dick Moxie. You just take me 'cause—'cause you have to, you know you do."

"No, I don't." Dick struggled bravely over the falsehood. "I—I'd rather have you than anybody." It was a generous little lie and Marjorie loved him for it.

"Honest, Dick?" She lifted her wet face. "Do you want me? If you say you want me I'll go. I couldn't go if you didn't want me." Her eyes sought his hopefully. "Isn't there someone else that you'd rather have?"

"Honest Injun, not a soul!" Dick reiterated and somehow the perfumed note lost its importance. Dick wanted her. She was going. Mother Moxie pressed her white brilliantine dress and Jane made some lovely blue bows. She wore Mother Moxie's fleecy opera shawl and carried a fan. The letter fell out of her pocket when she went to dress and lay on the closet floor forgotten.

How the lights did twinkle along the street and how blue the sky was! And Charlie Johnson's was just the prettiest place,—great branching trees in the yard, dozens of them, and lawn swings, one on each side, and hammocks, too; and Charlie Johnson had a dove house fast to his barn and always there were the dearest blue doves with coral-colored feet hopping about. And they had a piano and an Angora cat and —everything. If there was any place in the whole world where a party could be perfectly delightful it was there. She squeezed Dick's arm as they came in sight of it.

"You're so good," she whispered. He was good —hundreds and hundreds of times better than she. If he knew— For a moment she longed to throw her arms about him and confess; but she fought her tingling conscience back desperately. He would probably leave her right there in the street. She shouldn't tell him. No indeed. She was going to be happy. She was. She thought of Grace Dunning all togged up waiting in the parlor, and laughed hysterically.

"What's the matter?" Dick tightened his hold of her. "Are you getting giddy?"

"I—I was just thinking—" Marjorie stammered, "—of—of—of a monkey."

"Well, you'd better sober down if you're going with me. I don't want to escort any chessy cats."

—She would wait and wait and nobody would come, and oh, how her black eyes would snap and how she would rave around! There wouldn't be any living with her. Marjorie pictured her dressed in sky blue with more than a dozen bracelets and bangles on. She laid her cheek against Dick's arm. If it had been Annabel or Mabel or Belinda—but Grace Dunning—after all, she was being kind to Dick.

"Seven o'clock, sharp"—It was that this minute. She was probably standing in the door wishing she could get her hands on him, but she couldn't. Marjorie patted him protectingly. It would do Grace Dunning good to stay home from one party.

What was her surprise upon entering the hall to see first of all Grace Dunning, in the smartest of bright frocks, with more bangles than ever, and laughing merrily as though there hadn't a thing in the world happened. She vouchsafed Dick and Marjorie a cold stare that was meant to be simply squelching. Marjorie felt Dick shrink perceptibly and for a moment she was overcome with pity and remorse and indignation. Oh, she could never have dreamed that Dick would care! Grace Dunning wasn't worth it. The whole of her wasn't worth Dick's little finger. What right had she to snub him, say! Indignation gained over all other emotion till it was paramount. Her Dick! and to be snubbed in cold blood! Then remorse began gradually to eat its way back. He cared. Would he look so perfectly desperately wretched if he didn't care terribly? Of course he cared and she was to blame for it. If it hadn't been for her Grace Dunning would have smiled at him and he would have been happy. She looked helplessly over to where he sat, stiff and dejected in a gilt reception chair. He wasn't enjoying himself at all, neither was she. She felt perfectly *abominable,* though it was simply a delightful party.

There were all sorts of games, and lovely mottoes hidden in every corner with strings fastened to them, and Mrs. Johnson played the piano for them to play "American Girl Come Volunteer," and the Angora cat had kittens, just the dearest, fluffiest balls of fur, and they brought them all into the parlor, and they tangled the motto strings all up, and in the dining room a table was spread just beautifully with glass and silver and cakes with candles on them and carnations, great pink bunches of them, where they were going to eat by and by. They played the jolliest games and Charlie Johnson just chose her over and over, though she didn't care if he did or not. If Dick wasn't going to be happy she wouldn't, and oh, he was getting miserabler every minute! He wanted to choose Grace Dunning but he didn't dare to, and Edwin Cobb chose her and she flirted with him over her fan. If he couldn't choose her he wouldn't choose anybody and he just poked way off in the corner and wouldn't play. Oh, it was terrible! She couldn't bear it! She couldn't! She crept away out doors and hid herself in one of the big lawn swings.

She had to face it, she might as well do it first as last. It wasn't *her* Dick any more. Some one had supplanted her in his affections. Always, from now on, she would have to share him with somebody. If it wasn't Grace Dunning it would be somebody else. Not once this whole night had he chosen her, not in "Skip To My Lou" or anything, and always before he had chosen her more than any. When they began like that they kept right on, nothing would stop them. It was like the measles, when a body came down with them they had to go through it. They ran a regular course. It didn't seem to matter how young a body was or how old, they were always in danger of taking them if they hadn't gone through them thoroughly. Some people had them harder than others. Dick would. It would just about carry him off. As for her, she didn't mean to have them, not for a great many years, perhaps never. She'd have to like to make a fool of herself better than she did now. If she ever did take them she hoped she'd have enough sense left to go to the woods where she wouldn't be tormenting anybody else. People who were in love weren't good for anything else and they might as well give up their time to that and be done with it. Jane wasn't and she'd had several light attacks. Some people went right out of one attack into another.

Grace Dunning did. She was always talking about the boys. As for her, she didn't see anything very interesting in the most of them, just a lot of conceit and swagger and some of them were soft, nothing to lose sleep over at any rate.

But Dick was different. He would probably have a girl almost every night now, and take her home from church and everything. There wasn't any use hoping he wouldn't; he would. Their good times were over. Big salty tears rolled down and fell into her lap. Still if Dick cared— If she couldn't have but just one thing she wanted Dick to be happy, even if she had to have Grace Dunning. If he couldn't be happy with just her any more why—why she didn't want him. Some one was stepping softly over the grass. It was Charlie Johnson. She turned upon him fiercely.

"Go right straight back! What are you tagging me for? I want to be left *alone!*" she blurted out, and hid her face in her arm, kicking one foot out at him spitefully.

"Why don't you come in?" he protested. "We're going to play forfeits, and want you."

"Well, if I wanted to be there, I'd come, wouldn't I? Can't you take a hint?"

"If you don't want to come in can't I stay out here with you?" he begged, sitting gingerly down on a small portion of the seat. "—There isn't any one in there that I care for."

"Why not?"

"'Cause I don't. I think you're bully. I like you best of anybody."

"Well, you needn't tell me of it. I don't thank you much."

"Besides it's most supper time and I'm going to have you for a partner. Everybody chooses the one he likes best, and I choose you; anyhow it isn't nice staying out here," he reproved her.

"I don't care whether it's nice or not. You're not nice either," she retorted rudely. "Can't you leave me be?"

"I will if you'll promise. It's my party you know, and—"

"Well, I just won't, so there! I'm not going to eat any supper. I'm going in; if you want to stay out here and moon you can." She flounced past him haughtily.

Where was Dick? Perhaps he and Grace Dunning had made up; but no, they hadn't. There he sat looking like the last rose of summer. If anything, his face was longer than ever. He didn't look as though he had ever smiled. She went over to him determinedly. She had made up her mind. It would be like pulling eyeteeth but she meant to do it. He was sitting in a dear little cosy corner and there wasn't a soul around. She carefully drew the curtains. There was a little stool at his feet. She sank down upon it and hugged his knees.

"Bend over!" she commanded. "There's something I want to tell you—very important." Her tones were tragical, her eyes large and bright with suppressed emotion. "In a minute they're going in to supper, and I want you to take *her*. Yes, I do. I didn't, but I do now. You want to, you can't hide it. You're just d—dying to. Oh, I know you are." Her voice was thread-like and trembly. "She's haughty and snippy and horrid and I don't love her; but if you do I'll try to, and—and she isn't to blame for snubbing you. *I* am. There *was* a letter. Oh, there *was!* There *was*. And I couldn't bear to give it to you, and—and it was in Johnnie Muggses' old coat, and you were so—so cross, and—Oh!—Dick!—I wanted you myself!" She hid her wet face on Dick's knees.

"If it had been Mabel or Belinda or Annabel, maybe I could have borne it; but oh, no! I couldn't either. I never *can*. Have you got to have it—so *young?* Oh, Dick! Why couldn't our good times have gone on forever? Do you really l—love her so m—much?" Dick laughed. Oh, he did! He could laugh. Marjorie looked up excitedly.

"But you do care, don't you, and you'll take her in to supper, and maybe after a while you'll both be happy again? I hope so. I shan't eat anything."

She looked so miserable Dick laughed again and snuggled her up in his arms.

"Do you know, there isn't but one girl here that I'd take in to supper, and that's you," he whispered in her ear. "I'm going to, too; that is, unless Charlie Johnson has got the start of me. Has he?"

"You know he hasn't, Dick; nobody could. Do you think I care for him?"

"Well, then I guess we'll both be happy once more."

"And—and don't you care? Don't you l—love her?"

"I should say not. Do you think I did?"

"Y—yes."

"Well, I don't. I couldn't after to-night."

"And you're not mad at me?"

"What for?—About that note? Dwight Jones told me all about that. He delivered it. Says he rung the bell twice so he just stuck it in the pocket. I don't care. I'm glad I didn't get it."

"Are you? Honest?" Marjorie looked at him, anxiously. "And—and aren't you going to keep on? Haven't I got to g—give you up?"

"Not till some good-looking fellow comes along and takes you away from me. It won't be right away, will it, Sis?" He tugged at her brown braid tenderly.

"It won't *ever* be," Marjorie told him.

CHAPTER XVI

FISHERMAN'S LUCK

"What a relief it would be if we could only adjust things so there wouldn't be a continual battle inside one between the 'want to' and the 'ought to'."

"Marjorie! I've called you twice now, that's a great plenty. Come! Get up! That's a good girl! Breakfast is almost ready." Mother Moxie went back to finish the griddle cakes. She baked three more batches without a sound from overhead. Jane tiptoed slyly to the stair door.

"Marjorie Moxie, you get right straight up! You aren't any better to lie there in bed than other folks. I called you when I came down and I know you were awake, too, you were only playing 'possum. Mother, she hasn't stirred!" she appealed in injured tones. "It isn't fair."

"Come, daughter!" Father Moxie took his turn in the hallway. "It's a fine day. Be up and stirring! Mother has the cakes all baked." It was hard to resist father. Marjorie drew an extra thickness of quilts up over her ears. It might be a fine day; but it wasn't more than an hour since she went to bed. If folks wanted to get up in the middle of the night they could. She wanted to sleep. She was going to. She didn't care if the cakes were baked. She didn't want any breakfast anyhow. Why couldn't people leave her alone?

"Say, Miss! you'd better crawl out of there!" Dick was stamping in the hall like an Indian. "You're a good one. Here it is seven o'clock! I'd be sick. You'd better get up or you'll wish you had! Hey! Marjorie! Marjorie!" He threw an old shoe at the door. Marjorie crawled miserably under the pillow.

And she had been dreaming such a beautiful dream—all about birds and flowers and going to the loveliest places. In vain she tried to gather up the tangled threads. She and a lovely girl with golden hair had been in a thick forest, and they were just bending down to a lovely pool to drink, and the girl had said—Oh, dear! What had she said? There wasn't any use. She couldn't remember. It was gone—never would she be able to dream one half so lovely. If she ever did have a nice dream somebody spoiled it. And there was Dick hollering again.

"Marjorie Moxie, if you don't scramble out of that I'm coming up. Oh, I say, Marjorie!"

"Why don't you *yell!*" Marjorie drew her head out disgustedly. "I'd like to know who could sleep. It's a pity a body couldn't take a minute's peace! No! I'm not getting up, if you want to know. I'm not going to. There! Now will you go away and let me be?" Dear! how good the bed did feel! She turned over into a cool fresh spot. How was a body ever to know how nice a bed was if they had to hop out as soon as ever they got awake enough to enjoy it? The very best time of the whole night was in the morning. Some folks always hated to see other people taking comfort. As for her she didn't see any sense in changing conditions when one was perfectly and delightfully happy. Didn't a body know themselves when they had had sleep enough without being told?

"Marjorie, must I come up after you? You worry mother to death." It was father again. Marjorie sat up miserably.

"Yes'm. I'm getting up," she called down meekly. She rubbed her eyes. What! were they eating? She listened to the rattle of dishes below. They *were*. Hot cakes and fried potatoes and coffee. She hurried into her clothes.

"You oughtn't to go a step." Dick reproached her. "If you'd stayed moped off in bed much longer I'd have gone without you."

"Gone where? Oh, Dick, you *aren't!* Why didn't you call me?"

"*Call* you! *Call* you!!" Dick snorted. "I'd like to know what a body'd call you with short of an earthquake. Mother's trotted clear to the stair door three times. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am." Marjorie was humility itself.

Oh, she had almost missed the very treat of the whole year! Dick was going to Whalen Lake. He *was*. She was going with him, mother just said so. Supposing she had stayed in bed an hour longer. Oh, she would never, never have gotten over it if she had missed that! She gulped her breakfast down excitedly, never bothering for "lady bites." Oh, and they were going to take their lunch in a basket!—bread and butter and fried chicken and pickles and preserves and dear little patties of cheese; yes, and oranges and cake and raspberry tarts. Mother was packing it. It looked so delicious it took away her appetite for plain pancakes and coffee. Oh, what fun it would be to eat it sitting where it was all piney and green!

Dick was in the garden digging bait. She could hear him. He had let out the Appetite. They were going to take her along. Wouldn't she have a perfectly delightful time? She would wag herself clear in two, she was bound to. Father had brought Dobbins's old horse and tied him to the front gate. He was a lovely old horse with a great big Adam's apple on the wrong side of his neck, and knobby knees. He looked mangey. It was an interesting old buggy, too, with a rusty, broken-down board and a frazzled whip sticking up in front. Oh, they were going to have a perfectly romantic time! She hunted out her old tea-matting hat that she hadn't worn since last summer. A red string was missing, but she remedied that by pinning on a blue hair ribbon.

"You aren't going to wear that old dress with a streak all round where mother let down the hem?" Jane questioned. "It's patched in a dozen places and a hole in the elbow besides. It's to be hoped that you'll keep on the back streets. I'd be ashamed to go through town in that."

"Well, I shan't be. I'll sail along as big as Cuffy. Thank goodness I'm not so proud I'm miserable! I'm not posing as any fashion plate. I'm going to be comfortable. This is the comfortablest dress I've got. For a wonder it's big enough. I might possibly eat all I wanted for once. 'Twould be a pity, wouldn't it? I s'pose you'd have me go mincing along in French heels and a corset. Where's that red bandana handkerchief you were going to make a footstool of, Jane Ann Moxie? I thought it was right in the very top of this rag bag."

"It was. Why? What are you going to do with a red bandana handkerchief? Tie it around your neck? You aren't! Mother! Marjorie's going right through town with an old bandana tied around her neck! Won't she be a spectacle? I wouldn't disgrace the family."

"Well, you needn't. I almost always save you the trouble, don't I? If wearing a red handkerchief around my neck is any disgrace I can do it without the least qualm of conscience, so you needn't feel at all indebted to me, dear Jane. I'm going to do it, so you might as well tell me first as last; if you don't, Jane Moxie, I'll wear a—a stocking. Everybody knows that a red bandana handkerchief keeps the sun off. I s'pose you'd wear a low-necked gown with elbow sleeves, wouldn't you? Everybody wears one who goes fishing. Dick has one and I'm going to. Mother! Can't she tell me where it is if she knows? There; if that looks very bad I'll eat the greaser." Having fished it out Marjorie knotted it under her chin in a careless tie.

"Where is Dick? Oh, where's our bottle of cold tea? We mustn't forget that. I'll bring the dinner basket. Dick, have you got the pails, and the poles? Oh, put them on behind as old Jimmerson does! Can't you? They look so—so artistic. There now! I'm going to sit on this side. We're ready. Now cluck to your horse, Mr. Good-driver! Do you really suppose he'll go, he looks so stationary? Aren't his ears awfully long for a horse? He couldn't be a mule, could he? There isn't any difference between a horse and a mule, is there, except their ears and—and the bray? Perhaps he'll bray. Oh, I hope he will, don't you? Wouldn't it be a joke if he was a mule? What shall we call him? Here, Jim! Here, John! Here, Charlie! Here, Billy! Oh, let's call him Dobbins! It seems to fit him best of anything. Isn't it strange how an animal gets to look just like his master? Now if that isn't the Dobbins nose exactly, and Philander Dobbins's expression over and over! Yes, and their dog has it too—the same eyes. I don't know how to express it unless it's what you call an aching void. Oh, he isn't going. Pull on the lines a little bit! 'Gidap' to him! Did you ever see such a contrary creature? He's so clumsy, he doesn't know what to do with his feet. He's walking all over himself. Oh, Dick, won't you quit pulling! He'll sit down on us. There! He's moving. He's started. We're going. Good-bye, mother! Good-bye, Jane!" She waved her handkerchief out behind.

"Oh, Dick! Mustn't it be awful to have such big feet, and four of them? How can he keep track of them—four at once! Supposing he couldn't get them out of the way in time! He's trotting. Oh, Dick! don't let him! He looks as though he was going all to pieces. Supposing he should do something to himself! Is the Appetite coming? Oh, yes; there she is!—Way ahead, just tearing up the dust. Isn't she happy? Aren't you? Isn't everybody? Why, I'd rather be just me than the Queen of Sheba, wouldn't you?" The buggy rattled conspicuously down Main Street and around the corner.

"Oh, there's the watering trough! Let's water him!" They reined up with a grand flourish. "Can he drink with those things in his mouth? There, old boy! Water is cold and unsympathetic stuff, but it fills up terrible vacancies sometimes. Oh, I hope he won't burst! Doesn't he make the awfullest noise? He's swallowing bubbles. Do you suppose it will give him the colic?"

They turned off into the country road. Everything was fresh and sweet. Dew still lay wet on the grass and the night mists were drifting over the sky in tiny clouds. Bright daisies lifted their faces along the way like fresh washed children on their way to school. Birds sang merrily in the woodland patches as they went through. Now the air was sweetened with fields of ripening clover, again it was white buckwheat or tasseling corn. When they struck the hollows it was the pungent scent of mint and cress crushed into fragrance by thirsty cattle. Close by a little gurgling stream Marjorie sniffed at the air greedily and caught the reins.

"Oh, Dick! Stop! Wait! Let me out! It's berries; raspberries! I smell 'em! Don't you? Could any one mistake that delicious preservy smell? There they are! I knew it! —Whole bunches of them!" She sprang out over the wheel even before old Dobbins had come to a standstill. Oh, how good they were! She put whole handfuls of them into her eager mouth. Dick followed, and the Appetite, barking and yelping, knocking a shower of crimson fruit to the ground as she tore through brambles and bounded over charred logs. Never had raspberries grown such delicious cups of sweetness, a dozen in a bunch and each bunch a mouthful. They ate till they were satisfied, then they picked old Dobbins some tender, luscious tufts of grass that grew in the springy bottoms.

All along the way there were surprises. Here a bush of wild roses, and there a scattering of bluebells, then all of a sudden "mother bonnets," hundreds and hundreds of them lifting their purple hoods proudly in the sun.—And wintergreens.—Oh, such delicious spicy fellows springing up all around the stumps! The buggy box was loaded with treasures before they were halfway. Marjorie guarded them solicitously.

"Don't wiggle around so, Dick! You're scrunching everything," she cautioned. "See there, now! Your elbow is right in the roses. Let one foot hang outside, can't you? There isn't any room for that lovely feathery fern I dug up for mother. Where's the wintergreens? Oh, Dick! you're sitting on them, of course. You're always doing something. Why aren't you careful?"

"Maybe I'd better get out and walk," Dick suggested miserably, trying to adjust his feet in small compass. "You seem to have monopolized things in here. I don't see what you wanted to gather all that stuff now for. It'll wilt."

"It shan't! Dick Moxie, I believe you would have been mean enough not to have dug up that lovely fern, when you know mother's been wanting one. I s'pose you would have gone right by all those lovely roses, the very first we've seen this year, and nobody knows if we'll ever see another. Anyhow, we've got these and I mean to keep them if we both get out and walk, so there! When I get to the lake I shall dig a nice little hole and sink the stems in water, poor dears! Oh, look away down there, Dick! Is it the sky? Are we on a hill? Oh, is it water? Is it the lake? Are we *there?* Oh, Dicky, Dick! Isn't it lovely, lovely, lovely?"

The lake lay beneath them, a shimmering looking-glass in the July sun, the shadow of white clouds floating upon it like boats, and stately pines bordering it with a deep green fringe. Under a great drooping water willow a tiny boat snuggled, its nose to the bank. Dick and Marjorie both clambered out excitedly. They hitched the horse to the back of the buggy-box and gave him the hay they had brought for him under the seat. Marjorie clapped her hands and danced about jubilantly.

"It's a dear of a lake. I never imagined it was as nice as this. And isn't that a dream of a boat? And oh, you'll let me row part of the time, won't you? I can. I won't tip it over. Oh, please, Dick, let me try!—And isn't it a glorious day?—And shall we go now or eat something? I'm terribly hungry. Let's have dinner first, I believe we will be able to enjoy things better. I brought some potatoes. There's a lovely place to build a fire. Have you got a knife to whittle shavings?"

Dick found a pine knot, and Marjorie went down to the water's edge to wash the potatoes. They soon had things going in real camping-out fashion. The pine knot crackled and sputtered and sent up delicious resinous smells. Mother Moxie's new tin pail swung merrily in place of a kettle.

"I believe I'll just go and catch a fish while the potatoes are boiling," Dick suggested.

"A fried fish would go pretty well, I'm thinking."

"Yes, but we haven't got anything to fry him in."

"Well, we could roast him."

"Yes, we could roast him. Oh, Dick! I'm going too," as she saw him untying the boat. "It wouldn't take but just a minute, would it, to catch—say one?"

"We'll catch a dozen," Dick said confidently as they pushed off.

"Isn't the water simply beautiful? Oh, I wish we could have it right in our dooryard, don't you, Dick?"

"I guess the dooryard would be out of sight, all right."

"Well, I guess we could have our house right down here by the water, then it would be all dooryard. I didn't say how big a one," Marjorie persisted. "My! what funny little dumpy oars! Do you suppose we will capsize? Wouldn't it be exciting? Just row out a little ways and then fish. I love to."

"Yes, the fish would be apt to bite, wouldn't they?"

"Why not? Can they see me? There goes one! Oh, look! look! What a big shiny fellow! I can see bottom. I *can.* It's covered with lovely white sand and moss. Oh, I wish I could get in all over. Wouldn't it be lovely to swim? By and by I'm going to take off my shoes and stockings. Can I? Did you get a bite?"

"No, I guess I'm not apt to unless I leave you on the bank. The fish are all across the lake by this time."

"Are they? No, they aren't. There goes another this minute. They aren't afraid of me at all. I don't believe they can hear, they haven't got ears. Did you ever see a fish's ears? At least they aren't conspicuous like ours. Do you know you could pick out a Moxie anywhere by his ears? They're our—our trade-marks. Fishes are all eyes and mouth. They use their mouth for a nose. Oh, there! Didn't you get a bite? Your line jerked. Why didn't you pull it in and see?" Dick threw it farther out disgustedly. For a moment they both watched it anxiously.

"I don't believe you've got a worm on," Marjorie whispered. "I've heard Mr. Jimmerson spits on his hook. Did you spit on yours?"

A great snowy cloud floated over the lake till the boat seemed to ride in the heart of it. Gulls dipped and darted, wetting their breasts. They saw them without looking up.

"S—h—h!" Marjorie lifted a hand warningly. "There goes one, a beauty, right toward the hook. Don't breathe! He's going to bite. If you could wiggle it ever so little—Oh! There he goes! He doesn't like worms. What is it I smell?" She puckered her small nose into the air investigatingly. "Don't you smell something—familiar? My potatoes! They're burning! Here! Let me pull in the line! You row! Row, row for your life, Dick! Oh, wouldn't it be too bad if they should burn up?" She sprang ashore before the boat had scarcely grated on the sand.

"Oh, Dick! Our andirons are all burned up. The pail is in the fire. They're as black as—as your hat. Oh, isn't it too bad!—And we didn't catch a fish."

"No, we didn't catch a fish."

"But we have a lovely lunch—cake—and chicken, and oranges—I saw mother put them in,—and the potatoes mayn't be so bad." She fished the pail from the coals with a crooked stick. "No, they aren't. Just burned on one side. It'll give them a real camping-out flavor. I shan't mind if they're only burned on one side; shall you, Dick? 'Tain't as though we couldn't eat them."

They spread out the red-fringed napkins and began to take out the lunch. How good it did look! They scraped some of the butter off their bread to put on the potatoes.

"Isn't it strange that things never taste so good at home? What is it? —That lovely resiny smell that gives us such an appetite, or just because we're in the woods? Isn't this a beautiful pine tree we're under? The needles are so soft they're just like a cushion. I wouldn't mind sleeping here all night, would you? If we had something to cover up with, it would be just as comfortable. We could cover up with leaves, couldn't we? We'd be the babes in the woods then. It must be lovely to be a tramp and camp out all the time. Did you ever feel, Dick, as though you would love to be a tramp? I found a tramps' 'roost' once. There was an interesting black patch where they'd had a fire and a part of a log was smoldering yet, and in the bushes there were some smoky tomato cans and an old spider. I know they must have had just a delightful time, only I shouldn't have a roost, it sounds so—so unclean. It's smells that makes me want to be a tramp. I can stand seeing things, though it gives me a tugging sensation, when the little green things push up in the spring, I mean, and you feel that everything has sat still just as long as ever it can and something will burst if it can not wiggle. You can just fairly feel the earth crawling under your feet with things that want to get out—but when the smells come floating over from nobody knows where and you sit out in the garden and try to name them, only they're a thousand times sweeter than anything you ever smelled—arbutus, and beauties, and lilacs, and roses, and these piney smells too, and earth all mixed together by the little spring whirlwinds, I suppose, then it's as much as ever I can do to be civilized. I want to go and go and I don't want ever to stop. I respect tramps, Dick Moxie. I don't know which is the worst—to stay in the house and be nice and miss all these things, or to just wade in 'em all your life and never be nice. There's a lot to miss both ways, I s'pose. Now, a tramp must miss knives and forks and tablecloths and—and soap; but it would be terrible to miss this." She lay down and rolled over luxuriously. She crossed her hands on her waist front contentedly.

"I never felt so perfectly satisfied in my life," she admitted, "and here's a wing and a drumstick left for supper, and two lovely slices of cake and all this bread; besides all this for the Appetite. Where is she? She ought to be able to smell these chicken bones a mile away. She's usually right on deck at meal time."

"Well, she's got something more interesting to occupy her time." They listened and heard her baying a mile away.

"How she is enjoying it. Isn't it too bad people are made to want to do something they can't? Now, if dogs loved to lie down and be quiet and well behaved and roll over when their masters wanted them to, and thought it was simply delightful to be tied up and have a brass name tag and detested chasing squirrels, for instance; and if I only loved to stay home and help mother and Jane and get lessons and piece quilts for a setting out; but I don't, I abominate it and dearly love to do things that I oughtn't to do. Why is it the things we oughtn't to do are so nice? What a relief it would be if we could only adjust things so there wouldn't be a continual battle inside of one between the 'want to' and the 'ought to'? There are always the terrible remains of things that had to be sacrificed, you know, and sometimes one is a gory battlefield strewn with dead. One gets to dreading it so that after a while the very fact that one ought to is a sign that one don't want to. Oh, isn't it a wretched combination? And think! we'll never get over it. We'll always be hankering and hunting around for something we haven't been told we could do. Do you suppose that if these were the things that we had to do, if playing croquet and ball and building bonfires were, do you suppose we'd hate them as bad—as bad as we do the dishes, for instance? Oh, I suppose we would! It's just our horrible natures! If we couldn't do all those disagreeable things we'd break our necks to get at them. Now, there's the Appetite racing her legs off and going wild over a squirrel she can't get, while all these delicious scraps go begging. Human nature is a terrible problem.—And old Dobbins is wrecking the buggy for a measly wisp of wild grass with plenty of good civilized hay right under her nose. Come, help me pick some, Dick Moxie, and then we'll go! I want to go away over there in those shadows, they look so deep and cool. Don't you really believe the fish would bite better over there, Dick?"

The water slipped over the oars with a soft splash. Marjorie watched the little eddying holes as they drifted away from the oar's end. A long streak of silver followed the stern of the boat. She could put her hands in now. Dick was not fishing. How cool and soothing the water felt as it rushed through her fingers! She looked over the edge at her image and laughed. What a lovely green color water was when you were once upon it and yet from the bank it looked blue—as blue as the sky. She wondered why it was. There weren't any waves, not even tiny ripples. It was like polished glass. Oh, it would be lovely to be out when there were waves and whitecaps! Wouldn't it be grand to be out in a storm with great breakers tossing the boat from one side to the other, with the wind dashing wet spray in your face, and black threatening clouds in the sky and lightning that you could see just as plain in the water as you could above you? Oh, there was something powerful about water! It made one feel big just to look at it.

"This looks like a bass hole," Dick suggested, as they skirted a great ragged snag and came into the shadow. He laid the oars down softly and threw in his line. Marjorie got out her pole, too. They sat very still for a few minutes. Not a breath seemed to stir the leaves on shore. All nature seemed motionless. Their lines lay slack. Marjorie tried to peer into the darkened surface but all its mysteries were withheld from her. If there were fishes they swam about in unbroken seclusion. Turtles paddled about in the ooze and slime of the bottoms unmolested.

"Wouldn't it be lovely to be a mermaid?" Marjorie whispered. "Think of floating and diving and splashing about down there! Being able to see all the wonderful things and live in a lovely sea-castle. Right here would be a lovely place for a mermaid to build a castle. I wonder if there is one down there! Oh, I should dearly love to be a mermaid!"

"What's the matter with being a fish and done with it?"

"There's all the difference in the world, I should say. Just the difference of being caught and fried and not being—that's enough, isn't it? Who ever heard of frying a mermaid! Mermaids are just you, only with fins and things to swim with, and they can breathe just as well out of water as in it. They have heads and think beautiful thoughts. I've read about mermaids. Once there was a lovely mermaid who pined away wearing seaweed trying to catch a lover. It's very fascinating to read about mermaids. Fishes are common. What's the reason they don't bite? We haven't caught a one. My arm's numb. Have you had a nibble? I think I had one but she slipped off. It must be getting late. I wish they'd bite if they're going to. Do you believe this is a good place? There! My bobber's bobbing. I'm going to haul it in." She did. The hook was empty.

"Why, I forgot to bait it. Oh, well! I don't care. I'm not going to now. Let me off on shore! You can fish if you want to. I'm tired. There's a lovely sand bar over there. I'm going to wade."

She promptly began undressing her feet. With Marjorie to think was to act. The water was deliciously cool and refreshing. She splashed and paddled to her heart's content. There was no one to see but an anxious mother plover and a family of little plovers, and they were paddling too and hadn't anything to say. Marjorie laughed at them, they looked so, as though they had their clothes rolled up to keep them out of the water. Beautiful shells and bright polished pebbles strewed the sand and Marjorie gathered a pocketful. She meant to fill a bottle with them when she got home and tie a ribbon around the neck. It would make a lovely paper weight for Jane. Sitting flat on the sand, she buried her feet and built an imposing fort above them, then wiggling her toes she caused an earthquake to destroy a city.

Around the bend she could see Dick sitting patiently in the boat's stern, holding to his pole.

"Caught anything?" she kept calling. At first he answered "No," bravely, then he took to shaking his head, finally he ceased answering altogether.

"It's lovely over here," Marjorie tormented him. "You haven't any idea how nice it is to wade. Oh, Dick, I've found a pearl, the loveliest little pinky one! Do you suppose it is genuine? It's as big as my little finger nail. How much do you s'pose it's worth, Dick? How do you know it's a piece of clam shell? It isn't. Come over and see! Are you going to fish all day? I'm in clear over my knees."

Dick gave up at last and rowed over sullenly. "S'pose we'd better be pulling for home," he admitted.

"Oh, Dick! So soon? Aren't you going to wade any? It's a perfectly delightful sensation. The sand is so warm and soft. Do!"

"No, I don't care anything about it. I guess we'd better pull out." Dick was stubbornly dejected.

"Hasn't it been a perfectly lovely trip?" Marjorie remarked for the hundredth time as they neared shore. "There hasn't been a thing lacking."

"Nothing but the fish," Dick suggested drily.

"Oh, well, that isn't much of an obstacle. Fish would have been a lot of bother. It would flop and act horribly and somebody would have to clean it. After all, it seems to me we are very fortunate. We've had all the fun of fishing, haven't we—and—and the fishes are much better off." But Dick couldn't see it.

"Well, anyhow, there's the chicken," Marjorie persisted, bound to be comforting. "You may have the drumstick, I'll pick the wing. Surely that will help out some. Oh, Dick! What's that black thing floating?" Marjorie pointed an excited finger. "—It's a head! It's the Appetite. Oh, Dick! she'll drown. She's going down this minute. See her roll her eyes! She hasn't a breath left." Together they dragged her, wet and flopping, over the boat's edge.

"You horrible, horrible dog! Supposing you had drowned, and after father has paid three dollars to save you!" Marjorie hugged her effusively. "Did you find the lovely, juicy bones, you dear old doggie woggie? You've had a perfectly lovely time, haven't you? There, now! You must let me get out! You're the nicest, dearest old dog! You must keep down, now, while Dickie and I eat something. I'm starving. Isn't it comforting to think that we saved—Oh, Dick, something's been in it! There isn't a thing, even the napkins are on the ground. Not even a little teenty crumb. Oh, Dick!" She turned accusing eyes upon the Appetite.

"You horrible, selfish dog! Go right away! I don't love you any more. You're wretched! Don't you wag your tail at me! You haven't any more conscience than a—a porpoise. You'd steal from your crippled grandmother. Here, Dick! Here's a cold potato apiece. That's something. Thank goodness, she couldn't get at them. They aren't very prepossessing, but this is one of the times when we can't afford to be critical. I—I hope mother will have beans for supper—beans and—and Johnnie cake."

"Ham and eggs," put in Dick.

"Yes, and apple dumpling. Apple dumpling is filling—very. Well, it's worth something to get a good appetite," Marjorie suggested, cheerfully, as they urged old Dobbins into a trot.

CHAPTER XVII

THE STRUGGLES OF GENIUS

A case of "being kind by being unkind".

Marjorie had fled to the hammock directly after the midday meal. Twice had Jane come to the kitchen door and called her loudly, and once mother's mild voice had petitioned her to come in, but she only drew her feet up farther and rocked desperately. The old maple was friendly and drooped lopping branches to shield her. She even pulled her thick braids over her ears as if to shut out the sound. She wasn't going in. It was Jane's turn to wash them, anyhow, and there were stacks and stacks of them, with all the tin things from mother's baking, and company to dinner, too. She saw piles and piles of dirty dishes stacked up on the kitchen table as she ran through.

"I always have to wash them on Saturday noons, and Jane knows there's just carloads of them. I'm not going," she determined, savagely. She was making a crown out of maple leaves. She tried it on to see how it fitted.

"There, now! I'll be a queen, Jane Ann Moxie, and you shall wash the dishes; see if you don't! This hammock shall be my throne. Who dares to approach the queen's throne? You should be delighted to serve the queen, my dear sister. A whole panful of plates, to say nothing of cups and saucers! Let me see—mother baked cake and pie and doughnuts, not to mention bread." Marjorie sighed. "My conscience pricks terribly, but I'm not going in; you might as well save your breath, 'Mar-jo-r-e-e! Mar-jo-r-e-e!' Jane Moxie, you're a regular old mimic. I'd change the inflection, at least. That gets monotonous. Do hush up! I'm afraid you'll break a lung. I hope you're not worried on my account, good, solicitous Jane! I am well and thriving, thank you. I should advise you to get at those dishes if you mean to get through them before supper. And I s'pose father'll have the missionaries over again to eat us out of house and home. No wonder mother baked a whole half day. It takes a lot to fill them up. I suppose they contract the eating habit of the cannibals. There! I do believe she's commenced." She pricked her ears to catch the rattle of china in the kitchen.

"Poor Jane! I don't care—I did it last. This is a case of being kind by being unkind. If I humored you, you would no doubt grow up to be selfish and horrid. I'm no Mary Jane Dishwasher. I think father ought to get one if he means to feed many missionaries. I'll sweep the room by and by, though it isn't my turn to do that, either. I'm writing poetry, thank your honor; that is, I'm going to if things ever simmer down. I'd like to know what chance a body ever has to do anything in this house, anyhow. You couldn't even hear yourself think." She drew some crumpled sheets out from under the hammock pillow. "Let me see! Where was I? Oh!

> "The moon shone bright o'er the garden fair,

"What rhymes with fair? Hair, rare, glare. mare, stair. I suppose I could say:

> "The moon shone bright o'er the garden fair,
> As beautiful Mabel came down the stair—

"But stairs and gardens don't seem to harmonize very well. You see, this is going to be a medley like—like 'The Princess', and it's going to have a knight in it and a coal-black charger, and the lady is going to pine in a garden. She's pining now. It seems as though it would be easier to pine in the moonlight. Let's see, now!

> "The moon shone bright o'er the garden fair,
> On Lady Mabel with golden hair.

"That's pretty. If I can think of two more as sweet as that!"

> "It got in her eyes and made her rear,
> And caused her golden hair to tear,"

Dick finished mockingly, creeping up through the grass on his hands and knees. Marjorie fell headfirst out of the hammock, gesticulating wildly.

"S-s-h-h!" she commanded, clapping a compelling hand over Dick's mouth. "Now don't you dare to holler! Don't you make a noise! Do you hear, Dick Moxie? If you do, I'll—I'll gag you. If you had half eyes you could see I was hid." She burrowed down into the tall grass. "Do you know how near Jane has got the dishes done?" she whispered, tragically. "Has she begun to wipe?"

"She'll get you in a minute," Dick warned. "She was just out to the barn looking all over, and she speared all over the hay with the pitchfork."

"Well, she won't, alive." Marjorie was terrible. "I'm writing poetry and I don't propose to be interrupted."

"I'll help you out," Dick proffered, agreeably.

"She sat on a worn seat all alone,
And the moonlight over her shone."

"That wouldn't hardly do, for I've mentioned the moonlight twice."

"Yes, it's pretty much moonlight."

"Well, then, how's this:

"She sat alone on the garden seat—"

Marjorie corrected, thoughtfully.

"And the moonlight also shone on her feet.

"That rhymes beautifully—seat and feet. You couldn't ask for anything better than that, Marj," Dick suggested.

"Well, I'm not asking for anything, am I? When I do it's time for you to chime in. I'd like to know who could write poetry or anything else with you clacking. I don't want to hear any of your foolish rhymes."

"They are not foolish; that's what ails them. Now here's one that beats yours all hollow:

"I'm awfully sorry pretty Mabel,
I'd write you a rhyme but I'm not able."

"I guess you're not. Now keep still! If I need your assistance, Dick Moxie, you'll hear about it."

"Oh, there comes Nugget of Gold, Sis! Write one about him!"

"Dear little kitten so warm and fluffy,—"

Marjorie began, seriously. "No, that wouldn't do; there isn't a thing in the world that rhymes with fluffy."

"Oh, yes, there is! What's the matter with this:

"Dear little kitten so warm and fluffy,
You've eaten so much you are awful stuffy.

Stuffy rhymes with fluffy, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but that's horrid; besides, it isn't true. He's the dearest little fellow, and he doesn't eat any more than he wants. This is more like it:

"Dear little kitten as white as snow,
You're the dearest little kitten there is, I know,
You are all pure white except in patches,
She's the dearest kitten and never scratches.—"

Marjorie proudly recited.

"It's all on account of those spots so bold
That caused your name to be Nugget of Gold.
I hope you will live to be worth it, my dear,
And bring good luck to your mistress here.

"There, now! You couldn't have done that, Dick Moxie, not if you had tried a week.

"—It's all on account of those spots so bold
That caused your name to be Nugget of Gold."

She repeated the pleasing couplet.

"Huh! Now I'm going to compose one in honor of the Appetite." Dick began:

"The Appetite was not polite,
She dearly loved to bark and bite,
And she would run away and fight.

"She is a pup of great renown,
She loves to run away to town,
And the dog catcher almost ran her down.

"She got into our lunch one night,
And never saved a single bite,
She soon had it all out of sight.

"Oh, Appetite, you are a winner!
You certainly can get the dinner.
Oh, you never know what's in her.

"There, now! If that isn't as good as yours! It's more truth than poetry, too."

"Well, we oughtn't to show partiality. If we're going to making up poetry about the family, there's Consolation.

"Dear Consolation is so sad,
I wonder what can ail her,
I feed her lots of bread and milk
And never, never fail her."

"Whoa, now!" Dick stopped her. "It's my turn. There's Frolic.

"Poor little Frolic
Is subject to colic.
Because she can't cure it,
She has to endure it."

"And Catastrophe." Marjorie rubbed her head and scratched off the maple crown.

"Catastrophe, I fail to see
Where you and poetry agree.
You may be good but you're not pretty
Although it is a woeful pity.
Yet considering the life you've led,
You may be thankful you're not dead."

"Old Dobbins:

"Old Dobbins is a horse of worth,
When he goes he jars the earth;
It takes a lot to get him started,
From the hitching post he isn't easily parted,
But then he gives his tail a fling
And lights right out like everything."

"That isn't good metre. Besides, Dobbins isn't one of the family. Oh, Dick! I'm going to write one about our trip. Now, go away and leave me be! It'll be lovely." She bent over the paper and chewed her stubby pencil thoughtfully. "Let's see! How'll I begin it?

" 'Twas a glorious morning, the sun shone so bright
And the sky was as blue as could be,—

"Isn't that fine? What rhymes with be?"

"Me, tea, see, flee, she, gee, agree." Dick recited a long list. Marjorie hunted a stone, but there wasn't any.

"If you don't keep still I shall holler for mother. It's a wonder I know enough to pound sand, having to be pestered with you all my life. I s'pose you'd die of a caniption fit if you had to behave yourself two minutes. Now, Dick, *do* be still; that's a dear.

" 'Twas a glorious morning, the sun was just up,
  The birdies were scarcely awake,
When we hitched up old Dobbins and started away
  For a long happy day at the lake."

"Well, we didn't hitch him up; he was already hitched," Dick interrupted, plucking handfuls of grass meditatively.

"Supposing he was! It doesn't make any difference. In poetry you allow things; you have to; it wouldn't be poetry if you didn't. Now, hush up!

> " 'Twas a glorious morning, the sun was just up—"

"And there's another prevarication, right in the first line. The sun wasn't just up. It had been up hours. You were in bed when the sun came up, Miss. All the king's oxen couldn't get you out. You know it."

"Well, I see you haven't a grain of manners." Marjorie rose haughtily. "I'd like to stay for the development of your mind, and so forth, but I shan't —not with an—ignoramus. I'm going in, Dick Moxie, and don't you dare to follow me! It's to be hoped you'll lie here and meditate upon your ways."

He made a grab at her disappearing skirts and missed them. The hall door slammed. In the library Marjorie toiled away diligently.

> "The sky was so blue, just a few downy fluffs
> Were the only clouds in sight;
> Tired little lambies they seemed to me,
> Who were out of the fold all night."

"Right, tight, blight, plight, flight," Dick mocked through the keyhole. "Let me see it when you get done, will you, Sis?"

"No, I won't. You go right straight away from there! I'd be ashamed to snoop."

"I'm not snooping. I'm sitting right here in the rocking chair, eating an apple. They're lovely. The groceryman just brought them—yellow harvests. Open the door and I'll give you one!"

"I don't want any of your old apples. I can see through your tricks. You want to get in, don't you? Well, you won't." Marjorie plugged her handkerchief in the keyhole.

"Bright little daisies that grew by the road,
Nodded good-morning to us—

"Us, plus, thus, muss, cuss—oh!"

She could hear Dick smacking tantalizingly outside. He run a long peeling over the threshold.

"Bright little daisies that grew by the road,
'Good-morning,' they said, as we passed—

Passed, last, mast, dast, sassed——

"Bright little daisies that grew by the road—"

"Say, Marj! Going to put in anything about our graceful steed? You ought to. Say,

"Our old bay nag he was a bird,
If it wasn't for the gad he never would have stirred.

"It surely wouldn't pay to slight one of the leading characters."

"Bright little daisies that grew by the road,
'Good-morning,' they said, as we came,
And a dear little squirrel stood up on a fence,
And gnawed at a nut just as tame."

That was true. A dear little squirrel had—though it might not have been a nut, still it must have been.

"Oh, all the way everything was so sweet,—
The clover, the buckwheat, the flowers,
We drew long deep breaths and—

"Oh, say, what rhymes with flowers? Hours, towers, sours."

"Don't forget the Appetite. She figures heavy in this tragedy. She was the villain. Let me do some of the verses. Here's one:

"Just to make things exciting,
The Appetite without inviting,
Swam out to surprise us.
My! we thought she'd capsize us.
But we got her by the collar—
Oh, you'd ought to heard her holler!
—And dragged her in as quick as scat,
A-looking like a drowned rat.
Of course, just like an old dog Rover,
She up and shook herself all over.

"You can't improve on that. I tell you, a few touches of mine are just what you need. Come! Open the door. Do, Sis! I won't do nothing." But Marjorie refused to answer, though he pounded on the door like an Indian, and let out war-whoop after war-whoop with his mouth close to the jamb. He could hear her pegging away.

> "Oh, all of the way everything was so sweet,—
>   Pink fields of blossoming clover,
> With patches of buckwheat all white on the hills,
>   And bees buzzing busily over!"

When at last Marjorie opened the library door Dick had given up the siege and was out in the front yard kicking a croquet ball viciously.

"You think you're smart, don't you?" he accosted her, crossly.

"Course I do. I know I am. It's all done and there's fifty verses of it. You shan't see it, neither, to pay you for being so mean."

"Huh! I don't want to. S'pose I'd waste time reading fifty verses of that stuff? You must think I've got lots to do."

"Well, it's good, just the same. It's got in it all about your not getting a bite and about our lunch and everything," she tempted him. "Perhaps I shall have it published. It's good enough a-plenty. If I should get forty or fifty dollars for it I guess you'd haul in your horns."

"Huh! Great stuff, I'll bet!" Dick snorted. "Come! Get a ball if you're going to play! I'm not going to fool around on your motion all summer. Edwin Cobb just motioned me to come over."

"Well, why don't you go, then?"

"I thought you wanted to play croquet."

"Well, I don't mind playing a game," Marjorie admitted reluctantly. "The reds are mine, though. That's my mallet. Here's your old yellow thing. Give mine here! Now you start."

"Oh, yes! You always make me start."

"Well, what of it? Hadn't you as lief? I don't see as it makes any difference."

"Only just you have me to play on—that's all; but I'll go."

"Oh, no you won't—not now. I'll go myself. Anyhow I don't need any advantage to beat you. There! I told you! I made both arches at one lick. I'm going half way around before you ever get a crack. See if I don't! I've got two strokes to make the next one. I shan't need but one. Oh!" as the ball rolled wide of the arch. "Well, I don't care; I'm out of your reach, anyhow. Come on! What you waiting for? There! You missed it, too. You're no better shot than I am. We've both got to strike for position. Hold on! It's my turn. There! That's a lovely angle. I can make it next time just as easy. Oh, Dick! You aren't going to knock me? You *aren't*. Don't strike it hard. Don't send it away across the yard! Please don't. I'll never get back. Oh, you did! Clear into the lilac bush! Oh, what made you? I never was so mean to you. Well, why don't you play it alone? You seem to be doing all the striking. Isn't it my turn pretty soon?"

"Now!" Dick drew a sigh of satisfaction. He was half way round. "Catch me, if you can, Sis," he defied her. Marjorie struck savagely—a random shot.

"Go on!" she snapped, poking her ball with the toe of her shoe.

"Look out! Don't you go to cheating!" Dick warned.

"Whose turn is it?" Marjorie was dejected.

"It's yours. Why don't you pay attention to the game? There! You needn't strike twice."

"Well, who could make an arch with all that grass in the road? I should think you'd clean out the field. There! Mother's calling you. You'd better skedaddle, young man!"

"Huh! Anxious to quit, are you? Well, just as soon as I get this one shot. Watch me hit the stake at one blow! Bim! I told you I'd do it. 'Fore I'd be skunked! How about the reds winning now? Hurrah for the orange!" Dick tossed his ball into the air triumphantly.

"Well, I don't care! It wasn't fair," Marjorie protested, hitting her ball a vicious stroke that disposed of it for the remainder of the season. She made a face at Dick as he strutted over the lawn.

Several days later Dick came tearing madly into the house, waving the evening papers.

"Ho, ho! Look here! Look here!" he shouted. "Miss Marjorie Moxie, age thirteen. 'One Summer Day, Spent at Beautiful Whalen Lake, Northrum, Michigan,'" he quoted, most impressively. "Behold! Miss Marjorie Moxie, poetess! It's all in here—fifty verses. Don't they look imposing? They take up two whole columns.

> "'Twas a glorious morning, the sun was just up—"

Marjorie ran in from the kitchen with the wiping cloth in her hand, and consternation in her face. The familiar words filled her with alarm. Her verses! She had left them all safely sealed on the library table, and just a little make-believe letter to the editor of the *Weekly Courier* on the inside. Some day she meant to be an authoress and there was no harm in practicing up. Of course she had addressed it. Dick had gone in and taken it. She pounced upon him.

"Dick Moxie, you put them right straight back! Did you tear them open? Give them to me! Do you hear?" She stamped her foot impetuously. But Dick was standing on a chair with both hands held over his head. In vain Marjorie pranced about and tore wildly at his legs.

"I guess I've got a right to read them," he defended himself. "—Anybody can. They're here in the evening paper, I tell you, as big as Cuffy."

"But—" Marjorie protested.

"There aren't any 'buts' about it. Look here if you don't believe me!" Dick displayed a portion of the sheet cautiously. "It's there, isn't it, just as natural as life? Now, will you cool down? I guess everybody in town has read about it by this time."

Marjorie wilted. And the foolish little note? Oh, what could the editor of the *Courier* think!

"Give it to me, Dick Moxie! Mother, can't he? It's mine. Oh, Dick! How could you! You're the meanest, meanest thing. It just lay on the library table, and I was fooling, you knew it. You just took it because it was the horridest, wretchedest thing you could think of. I'll never forgive you as long as I live—never."

"Mother said to mail the letters," Dick defended himself. "I gathered up everything in sight, of course, why shouldn't I! If there was any reason why it shouldn't be mailed you should have taken care of it. A body would naturally suppose that a letter that was sealed and addressed—"

"Well, come in here and read it, Marjorie!" Father Moxie called from the library. "Maybe there isn't much harm done after all. It didn't reach the wastepaper basket evidently. Why are you so anxious to keep your light hid under a basket? Perhaps you have more reason to be grateful to Richard than you know. Come in and read it, daughter!"

"It isn't anything," Marjorie protested, crumpling at it helplessly. "I just wrote it for fun. It's just about our trip, that's all."

"That doesn't matter. Simple subjects are always best," Father Moxie persisted. "I want to hear it. Perhaps we have a genius in the family."

"Oh, I just couldn't read it, father, don't ask me!" Marjorie hung her head.

"Yes, you could. Come on!"

"I'll read it," Dick proffered. "I'd just as lief." He made a grab for the paper but Marjorie warded him off.

"Well, you shan't. That's settled. If it's got to be read, I'll read it myself. I shan't have you bungling it up." And this is the poem as it appeared in the *Northrum Weekly Courier:*

ONE SUMMER DAY,
SPENT AT BEAUTIFUL WHALEN LAKE,
NORTHRUM, MICHIGAN.

'Twas a glorious morning, the sun was just up,
The birdies were scarcely awake,
When we hitched up old Dobbin and started away
For a long happy day at the lake.

The sky was so blue, just a few downy fluffs,
Were the only clouds in sight—
Tired little lambies they seemed to me,
Who were out of the fold all night.

"Get up!" to old Dobbin my brother said,
And he ambled away at ease.
Old Dobbin was not the horse to be crossed
But always to do as he pleased.

And after all it did not matter,
  For who would hurry away,
When so many wonderful, beautiful things
  All about us lay!

Bright little daisies that grew by the road,
  "Good-morning," they said, as we came,
And a dear little squirrel stood on the fence,
  And gnawed at a nut just as tame.

Oh, all of the way everything was so sweet,—
  Great fields of blossoming clover,
With patches of buckwheat all white on the hills,
  And bees buzzing busily over.

And just at the edge of a cool, shady spot—
  "Oh, brother, what is it I smell!
Red raspberries? Oh, if it is let us stop,
  For there's nothing I love quite so well!"

We stopped. And 'twas true,—great clusters of them,
  Peeping out of their bowers of green.
We ate and we ate—I know that *I* ate
  Till I was ashamed to be seen.

Then into the buggy we clambered again,
  After giving old Dobbin a bite,
And ambled along a flower-bordered road,
  That filled my poor heart with delight.

There were roses and bluebells and bonnets and pinks,
  Just blazing along the hillside,
And wonderful birds singing up in the trees,
  I couldn't tell half if I tried.

By and by I looked way through the trees and it seemed
  That I saw the blue sky far below,
But I knew we hadn't climbed any hill
  And of course it couldn't be so.

"Oh what is it, brother?" I cried with delight,
  But he left me to wait and see,
I closely watched and a wonderful sight,
  Dawned on me presently.

'Twas the lake, like a silvery sheet of glass,
  Sunk in the bushes there,
Fringed around with beautiful trees,
  That caused me to sit and stare.

In a flash we were out, old Dobbin was hitched,
  And we would have hastened to ride,
If it hadn't been we were both possessed
  With a terrible gnawing inside.

We wanted to go, the lake seemed to draw,
  With a thousand invisible wires.
Now I'm sure I know quite well what it means,
  By "being between two fires."

We gathered some sticks, at least brother did,
  I washed potatoes the while,
And soon we had things bubbling up
  In truly camping style.

Oh, what is more fun than to camp in the woods
  And cook things over a fire?
I love the piney smell of the smoke,
  It always did me inspire.

But alas, the lake lured us out for a trip,
  While the potatoes boiled.
We thought we would try to catch a fish,
  And stayed till they burned and spoiled.

That's the way when people do not decide,
  As they ought if they have good sense,
And put both feet on one side or the other
  And not sit astraddle the fence.

Of course we didn't catch any fish
  To pay us for whiffling about;
But we'd brought a beautiful lunch from home,
  And could very well do without.

There was lovely fried chicken and cheese and cake,
  Some beautiful oranges too,
Sandwiches and pickles, I'm sure 'twas enough
  To satisfy any, aren't you?

Perhaps I ought not to have mentioned these things,
  I'm not at all sure that I should,
I'm not certain they were poetical
  But I'm very sure they were good.

Well, our troubles once over we set out at last,
  After giving old Dobbin his hay,
This time we were going across the lake
  And soon we were sailing away.

Oh, I never knew that water was green,
  I always thought it was blue,
Like a beautiful piece of bottle glass
  That one is looking through.

I put in my hand and the water slipped through,
  Cool and gurgling and soft.
I made it into whirlpools and things,
  I should love to do it oft.

Oh, did you ever row on a lake,
  And hold your hand into it?
Such a lovely sensation it gives to one,
  If you haven't you ought to do it.

Oh, water, especially a lake like that,
  Reflecting the clouds above it,
So calm and peaceful and yet so strong,
  Oh, who could help but love it!

Not I, and yet I would love it best,
  I believe, when it raves and tosses,
Reaching its strong white hands to the bank
  To tear away the mosses.

For I love to see its mighty power,
  That naught has e'er controlled,
It makes me feel that even I
  Could be both great and bold.

We found a lovely place,
  As shady as one could wish,
And Dick and I got our poles
  And then began to fish.

But it was such a dreamy day,
  The fish were dreamy too,
And didn't care at all for worms,
  I wouldn't either, would you?

I dreamt I was a mermaid green
  And seaweed was my hair,
I hadn't baited my hook at all
  And didn't even care.

I thought I was a mermaid green,
  And lived in a pink seashell,
And all the little fishes came,
  With me in peace to dwell,

I thought I sported on the sand
  And on a reed did play,
Till all the little seashell ears,
  Perked up and turned my way.

I thought I was a mermaid dressed
  In silver scales and green,
I was the prettiest mermaid that
  Had ever yet been seen.

I combed my shining seaweed hair
  With a lovely real shell comb,
If any one molested me,
  A splash, and I was home.

The fish they didn't bite at all,
  But then, what did that matter!
But Dick he sat and held his pole
  As mad as any hatter.

The fishes no doubt, it seemed to me,
  Were far more comfortable there;
So if everybody was satisfied,
  Why! why need any one care!

So I went to the bank and paddled around
  I'm sure that nobody saw,
And left Dick to do the fishing alone,
  With a face as long as a moral law.

Oh, it is such fun to go splashing about
  Without any stockings or shoes;
Or you can sit on the warm soft sand
  And bury your feet if you choose.

I called my feet the Invisible Power,
  Built o'er them a city and steeple,
When whiff! In a breath, just the quirk of a toe,
  'Way went a thousand people.

And that is the way in this world uncertain,
  We never can tell what lies in under,
We build great plans or cities perhaps,
  And when they fall we stand and wonder.

And rowing home, Oh! what should befall,
  But our dog we had left on the brink,
Set out to swim to the boat; I was scared,
  For fear the poor creature would sink.

She came up all panting, with eyes bulging big,
  "Oh brother! Quick! Quick! or she dies."
And it does seem he never can drag her inside
  No matter how hard that he tries.

But at last he has her by the hair,
  And soon she lies before us,
But she felt so little gratitude
  She shook herself all o'er us.

We thought it was time we were getting home,
  And of course we thought of mother;
But because we hadn't caught any fish
  My heart it ached for brother.

"Never mind," I said, "there's a lovely lunch,
  That we left when we ate our dinner."
But that ungrateful dog had been,
  And eaten it up, the sinner!

I suppose you all say "fisherman's luck";
  But I think it was all for the best,
We had all the happiness we could hold
  And left the fishes the rest.

It was cold going back. We got out the robe,
  And snuggled it up behind us,
And old Dobbin lit out lively for home
  And the Appetite trotted behind us.

And now I've told you the tho' and thus,
  This may not be anything to you but 'twas a lot to us.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAY OF SURPRISES

"Wouldn't it be horrid if nature had to be dull and modest to please a few poky people who think they are artistic?"

"What are you doing?" Jane appeared in the kitchen door with an armful of cotton scraps. The unusual silence in the back part of the house had aroused her suspicions. She peered in curiously.

"Nothing." Marjorie stood guard over the kitchen cabinet. She did not turn around.

"Yes, you are. Let me see!"

"No, I'm not. I'm just standing here scraping out a spoon."

"Let me see it."

"Well, there! look if you want to!" Marjorie thrust a sticky cake spoon over her shoulder.

"That isn't all." Jane was approaching persistently nearer. Marjorie dragged a bread cloth over something and turned to face her.

"Well, now, what do you see, Miss Spinster Spy? I s'pose you really feel satisfied. I told you I was scraping spoons." But Jane was inexorable.

"There! Look for yourself if you're bound to know. I'm sure I don't know what you would call it. Name it and you can have it. It doesn't seem to be anything in particular and everything in general. I guess it's a—a failure. It's sugar and flour and butter and eggs—it's everything but cake. I wonder what ails it?" Marjorie appealed to Jane helplessly. "I put in everything I could think of—a whole teaspoonful of lovely vanilla flavoring, and some of mother's dried blueberries, and everything."

"Did you beat the sugar and eggs?"

"Yes, of course, I beat everything. I wasn't a bit saving of elbow grease. I put in the flour and the butter and the milk and then the eggs and the sugar. I didn't beat the sugar and eggs any harder than I did anything else. I beat it all in half an hour. That ought to be enough, hadn't it?"

"Did you put in baking powder?"

"Baking powder? Of course not. There wasn't a thing in it the least bit sour; why should I put in baking powder? Why, there isn't anything to raise, is there? What!"

"The cake, of course."

"Oh!" Marjorie stood looking down upon it helplessly. It certainly did look as though it needed something of an uplifting nature. It was most decidedly depressed. She touched the resisting surface gingerly with her forefinger. "Was baking powder all it lacked?" She asked remorsefully.

"Well, the sugar and eggs should have been beaten first, and then the butter beaten in, thinned with milk, and the baking powder and flour sifted in together."

"Oh!" Marjorie was humble. "I didn't know as it made any difference which went in first."

"The principal thing it lacks," Jane said with increasing importance—"is experience. It takes much more of that than anything else to do things well. You ought to have asked advice of older people. It's a sin to waste good stuff like that." Marjorie's spirit came back with a rush.

"You waste things yourself," she retorted. "Dick and I have found them out; only sometimes you don't and we choke them down at the risk of life to save hurting your feelings. You ought to be as considerate of other people. I should think you'd be very sparing of your criticisms, at least till the memory of that last terrible cottage pudding gets out of people's mouths. Even father went away pale. I wouldn't say anything if I were you after the awful concoctions you've imposed upon the family."

"At least, I never made anything that looked like that." Jane defended her reputation.

"That's just it. It's its looks that's against it. It tastes all right. Dick will eat it," Marjorie suggested brightening up. "He'll eat anything. Here's some frosting he can have too if he wants it." She drew a saucer out from under the shelf recklessly. "At least it's eggs and sugar, but it hasn't frosted and it won't.

I don't know what ails the old stuff and I don't care. He can have it and welcome unless you would like to sample it, my dear Jane. He will probably be delighted. You can't ruin Dick's digestion."

"Evidently you will never be a good cook," Jane remarked disparagingly.

"Well, I don't want to be. I haven't any ambition in that line. Never fear, I shall not try to wrest the crown from you. You may have the honors for all of me. I aspire to something higher."

"I think it had better be the dishes for the time being," Jane remarked scathingly. "Here it is ten o'clock and you haven't touched them. I thought you were going to do wonders this morning while mother was gone."

"Well, I have, haven't I? Isn't this wonderful?" Marjorie brandished the cake tin tragically. "Greater things yet am I about to do; but it shall not be the dishes. For once I am going to prolong the evil hour to the last possible moment. I'm going to clean house, that's what I'm going to do. If you're going mussing around with carpet rags I should advise you to mosey along up stairs as I mean to monopolize this floor. I think it's time somebody got a cleaning-up spell. Things look as though they needed it." She led the way to the sitting room, and swung her arms about to take in everything.

"Aren't things orderly? Aren't they clean? When was that lambrequin taken down and cleaned, or that rack dusted? Never, I should say—but for once I'm going to make things fly. You can sit around and mope with old carpet rags if you want to. Just look behind those pictures! Do you see the dust? And here's a cobweb—a cobweb right in our sitting room. It's a wonder some one isn't hung. I'm just everlastingly going to tear things up. I'll surprise mother."

"Yes, I guess you will, all right," Jane remarked ironically.

"Well, I mean to clean this room, and the library, and the dining room, and mother's bedroom. Mother's bedroom never gets a thorough going over. We never touch it and she never has time. It's a shame how you and I neglect mother. When was she ever away for a day before? Answer me that! She never can get ready for church any more after primping us. But she's away to-day, thank goodness, and I'll make the time count. I mean to drag all the rugs out on the lawn and beat the life out of them. I'm going to black the stove in the dining room. I wonder if there's any blacking. And I mean to wash every window and rub off all the woodwork. I wonder where the ammonia bottle is. I want some right now to rub off these picture frames."

"I think I'd sweep before I commenced washing things," Jane suggested. "They'll be all dust again."

"Well, I mean to stand them all up on the porch and in the yard. Here! Help me get this one down! Don't stand there like a stodden bottle! At least you might help me move things. There are all those heavy bookcases in the library. It will be a blessing to get them swept under. I'm tired of sweeping around them. There may not be a particle of dirt under them but I always feel as though there were pecks. I'll scour out the vases too. No one ever does that. They just go and fire out an old bouquet and set them right back. Just look at all the brown horrid rings in mother's very best one. You threw out the last bouquet, too, yourself—I saw you—sweet peas. They're out there in the yard this very minute. You only went to the door and fired them out and you know mother wants us to burn every one. They look lovely, don't they? All those superannuated bouquets staring one in the face! I think you'd better mosey out and gather them up. I think when I get through I shall go to the store and get a new crepe paper for that shelf. It looks like a fright. Anyhow, I might as well tear this one off. What color would you suggest, Jane—pink?"

"I think the one that's on looks very well. It's a dull modest color."

"I don't like dull modest colors. Now this wall paper is dull and modest. It takes all the heart out of one. I like things to look bright and cheerful. I don't think they can be too bright. Is the outdoors ever too bright? Wouldn't it be horrible if nature had to be dull and modest to please a few poky people who think they are artistic? She mixes her colors to suit herself—red and blue, and green and yellow—and it doesn't shock anybody. I don't think, Jane Moxie, that a pink crepe scarf against a background of green wall paper is any worse than a spray of pink roses against a green outdoors. You'd clap your hands to see that, you know you would."

Marjorie whisked all the bric-a-brac off into Mother Moxie's shoe box deftly. In a few minutes the house looked as though a cyclone had gone through it. Stacks of books and magazines decorated the hall. Chairs were piled helter skelter, each bearing its share of the burden of things out of place. Father's Morris rocker held the bust of Lincoln and mother's work-basket—bulging with stockings. The spindle-legged reception chair bore up bravely under the glass case of curios, Dick's banjo, and Jane's fancy box of photographs. The organ stool was topped with four sofa pillows and mother's hand-painted plaque. Marjorie, with sleeves rolled up and a red-bordered towel pinned over her head, was bustling about energetically. The little bronze image fell all over himself to get out of her way, and the plaster of Paris shepherdess groveled humbly in the dust. With mother's big bib apron on and a dust cloth pinned over the broom, the household crumbled before her. Dick came crowding in through the dust, holding his nose.

"Well, you're making a pretty mess of things," he accused her. "I should think you'd choke a body to death and be done with it. Jane never makes such a dust."

"Good reason why. It's because she don't that I have to. You don't suppose dust comes in a minute, do you, Dick Moxie? This has been accumulating for ages. It's a good thing somebody has the energy to dig it out once in a while."

"Well, you'd better look out, you'll dig mother's carpet all to pieces."

"Oh, Dick! Look in there on the table at the lovely bouquets I've got all picked." Marjorie rested on her broom. "Sweet peas for mother's room and those lovely asters for the library, and nasturtiums for the dining room. Don't they look dear in that little Dutch bowl? Now, when I get things fixed I shall have to set them around."

"It would have looked about as well if you'd waited till you had got this mess cleaned up before you went to fooling with flowers," Dick reproved her. "You always get the cart before the horse. Why do you always do the nice things first?"

"Because that's the way to do. There isn't but just so much time, is there? Well, if anything gets left mightn't it better be something horrid than something perfectly lovely, say! If one leaves all the pleasant things that make it really worth while to do anything till all the ugly disagreeable things are done they'll never do them, and then they'll be cross and disappointed. I believe in taking some of the good things first. Now, if everything isn't done we'll have these lovely bouquets and they'll comfort us, won't they?"

"A lot of comfort I should say, especially when there isn't a thing in the house to eat." Dick peered into the kitchen. "What! Aren't the dishes done? Well, you're a dandy. No fire and no dishes and no dinner. What do you suppose mother will say to that?"

"I don't think she'll say anything five miles away, Dick Moxie. And if you're like to starve there's a cake out there on the table you can have, and some frosting to frost it with, too, if you want. I just baked it myself and you may have the whole of it. You can't say I'm not generous. There! take it and go along out doors." Marjorie thrust the tin upon him.

"A what did you say it was, Sis?" Dick looked incredulous. "A pancake, I should say. You made a mistake and took it for a chair cushion, didn't you? What's the matter with it?" He sampled it gingerly from the corner. "You didn't put any of mother's hair tonic in it, did you?"

"No, I didn't, goose. You needn't stand there and gobble it up. Take it along out doors if you want to!

The object is to get rid of you. And don't let's hear any more about being hungry!"

"No, I probably shan't be hungry again for a spell," Dick remarked, accepting the tin with martyr-like resignation. "If you come upon me rolling in death agonies you'll wish you had had a little mercy. I'm going out behind the shed; if you don't see anything of me for several hours perhaps you'd better look after my remains."

"Don't worry! If you were a whole hour without pestering somebody the whole town would be out in alarm. Now go. Are you going?"

"I'd laugh if the minister'd come." Dick turned on his heel for one last survey. "You certainly have been making a mess. I'd like to know where a body could sit down if they'd call."

"They wouldn't sit. They'd stand up same as I'm doing, or they could go out and sit on the grass, I wouldn't care. If ministers are bound to call they'll have to take things as they find them. Things have to be done in spite of ministers. I guess they'd never find things in apple-pie order if somebody didn't work sometime. It wouldn't make any difference to me if the King of England should call. Do you think it would, Dick Moxie? I'd go right on getting cobwebs." She stood on tiptoe to stab the duster savagely into the farthest corner. "I shouldn't even take off this apron."

"I'll bet you wouldn't! You'd fairly tear your hair. I can see Mis' Slocum, edging in here in her black silk."

"Well, I can't, and if you don't quit wrenching those curtain knobs you'll have them wrenched off entirely. I thought you were going. If you want to do something so bad suppose you wash the windows on the outside. You know you can handle the heavy ladders better than I can."

"Oh, I'm not pining for any job!" Dick moved toward the door. "If this is all I'm going to get to eat I guess I'll save my strength. It wouldn't do to exert myself unnecessarily. I might give out before night. Ta, ta! Hope you'll pull through, Sis, but things look dubious." He went into the yard whistling and Marjorie slammed the door behind him.

All the bundles came out of mother's closet, and the contents of the bureau drawers were dumped in one grand heap on the sitting room lounge to be sorted. It was to be a thorough cleaning. There weren't to be any neglected corners. Sofa pillows were bundled away to the clothes yard in armfuls. Bravely Marjorie tugged at the great rugs and beat and trampled and thrashed them over the lawn. It might be a herculean task but she was equal to it. She meant to put that lovely little kitten rug right in front of mother's bed, and clean tidies on everything. Nothing gave things such a clean look as fresh tidies. There weren't any on anything now. Jane had stuck them all off somewhere because they weren't stylish. She didn't care whether they were stylish or not. She meant to fish them all out and put them around—one on each arm of father's chair, and one on the organ stool, and all the head rests, and the dear little one with the pink lamb in it on father's footstool. Mother liked them, so did father and so did she. Jane was getting altogether too fastidious. When style interfered with one's having tidies if one wanted them and said whether one should have pink crepe paper on the mantel it was going too far, and time sensible people ignored it utterly. If those horrible pictures Jane had in the library were stylish she wasn't going to show any respect for fashion. There wasn't anything to them but a lot of inky daubs that a long ways off looked like a girl. They weren't any better than the ladies she had drawn with a cork on the fly leaf of her geography. Jane said they were posters and was very choice of them, and she had taken down mother's enlargements of father and Grandmother Allen, too, to make a place to hang them up.

Oh, here were her dear old Sunday school cards, all she had ever gotten in the primary. She sat down on the floor to look at them. She remembered them just as well. That precious little yellow chicken coming out of a shell she had gotten at Easter, and there was the arbutus card, "Rest in the Promise of the

Lord," from Children's Day. How much prettier cards they used to get than they did now,—lovely lilies and roses and little girls. Here was one—a little girl with a lovely pink sash gathering seashells. It said, "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Here was a boy, bringing his mother a lovely bouquet of roses, "Honor thy father and thy mother." She had saved every one. It was such fun to look them all over. She got up when the clock struck one and bundled them all away hurriedly.

Oh, what was in the sack tucked away off behind the closet door! It felt like eggs but it wasn't. She put her hand in. Oh, it was walnuts! She had forgotten all about there being any. When had she had a walnut! It must have been years. How good they looked. —And she was hungry. Anybody would be who had worked as hard as she had. She had blacked the stoves and cleaned all the rugs and was almost through sweeping. It was long past dinner time. If Jane had any decency she would come down and get dinner, but she didn't have, not a mite. She would sit upstairs and mope with a mess of old carpet rags that nobody cared the least thing in the world for, if everybody starved.

She went hunting for the hammer, dragging the sack behind her. Sitting on the back step with the flatiron between her knees, she cracked and cracked. It took a long while to fill up on nuts. It was three o'clock when at last she dragged the step ladder around and began to wash the front windows. Of course the water was cold. There wasn't any hot, and the reservoir was empty. Somebody always scraped out the last drop and never filled it. One couldn't make them look like anything with cold water. She stepped on mother's long apron and spilled half the water going up.

She was half way through when she heard the front gate click. She looked up and saw a dignified man in a black coat trying to fasten the latch. He had his back turned and in her haste to get down she upset the basin of water and sent the soap sliding along the walk. She ran in through the dust-choked hall and to the stair landing.

"Jane! Jane!" she called in a tragical whisper. "Some one's coming. Oh, Jane!"

Jane came tiptoeing down fearfully, her dress all lint from tearing rags, her hands stained with colors that had not been fast.

"Who is it?" she whispered awesomely.

"I don't know." Marjorie craned her neck to see out the hall window. "It's a stranger. He's coming in. Oh, Jane!" He was talking to Dick in the yard.

"Is this where Miss Marjorie Moxie lives?" Marjorie's heart at the keyhole gave a sudden bound.

"The *Courier* published some verses of hers last week. I am the editor—" they heard him clearing his throat. "I should like to see the young lady."

Marjorie dragged Jane into the sitting room, "I'm going to hide, Jane Moxie, I am." She looked about for a suitable place. "You've got to be it, do you hear? You might as well get your company face on. You've got to pretend you're her. Do you hear? Do you hear? He shan't see me. I'll crawl under the bed! I'll jump in the well! Oh, Jane! Do go!" as footsteps sounded on the walk. "Do, Jane! dearest, dearest Jane! You're an angel! You always are! You look it! I don't! I—I've been eating onions, and I haven't combed my hair. Look at me, will you, that's all I ask!" as she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror.—"Ain't I a spectacle. That's stove black—and so is that, and so is that. Would you go to the door looking as I do?—Would you? Say! Oh, Jane!" as a hand sounded at the knob, *"Won't* you?" The last was a despairing wail, for Jane was making her escape.

Marjorie made a desperate dab at the red-bordered towel that wouldn't come off because she couldn't find the head of the pin. It was arranged in a fantastic fashion. The fringe was gathered up in a bobbing Indian scalplock at the top of her head. She grabbed the big feather duster in one hand and the scrubbing brush in the other.

"Mr. Kimble, allow me to present you to our authoress, Miss Marjorie Moxie, age thirteen. Marjorie, this is the editor of the *Courier* come to call." Then Dick made an ignominious retreat. Marjorie could hear him sniggering tantalizingly around the corner.

"Take a chair!" Marjorie spoke from force of habit though she looked about wildly, for there weren't any to take. They were all stacked in the hall, an unsightly pile. She tried to disentangle one and succeeded in spilling a package of carpet tacks. "Is there anything I can do for you?" she asked stiffly, summoning dignity as a last support. "Things are a little upset. We've been cleaning house."

Yes, they were. There were mother's everyday shoes right in front of him, and—and a stocking, trailing—yards long. Mother's workbasket had toppled over and the bundles were rolling everywhere. The talcum powder was on the window sill, and the dust rag draped over Father Moxie's rocker. After all it didn't matter how she looked; there were so many other terrible things, he couldn't pay any attention to just one.

"You sent us some verses last week, Miss Moxie, that is, unless I am mistaken in the identity." He looked quizzically over his glasses. Did he mean to intimate that she didn't look like an authoress? The red fringe tossed defiantly. She gave him a withering glance.

"And we were very much pleased with them," he hastened to explain. "I just dropped in to see if I couldn't induce you to write some more."

"Oh!" Marjorie weakened.

"They seemed especially fine for one so young. We felt interested. We are always anxious to assist home talent," etc., etc.

"There, now, Dick Moxie! Whose turn is it to laugh now, say!" Marjorie caught him by the collar and held him. "You heard what he said, or you'd ought to; you lay right there with your ear to the crack every minute. He said my verses were lovely. He wanted me to contribute something more. You see the tables are turned! You thought it such a joke sending my silly verses to a paper. He said they were especially fine and that I had marked ability. That means ability that's going to make its mark. See if it don't too, Mr. Know-so-Much! He said he would consider it an honor. He appreciates me, you see, if you don't. Jane! Where is Jane! Oh, Jane!"

Her head came poking slyly out of the shed door. "Is he gone?" she questioned cautiously. "What did he want?"

Marjorie swelled with importance.

"He wanted to congratulate *me,* good sister Jane. He never asked anything at all about you. In fact, I don't suppose he knows there is such a person on earth. Too bad, isn't it? Think what he is missing. You refused to impersonate me. The time will come, wonderful Jane, when you will be glad to get into my shoes for even a brief and privileged moment. You will fall all over yourself getting there; but I shall remember how in this hour of my need you thrust it behind you with scorn and hid in the woodshed; and when I am enjoying the honor do not humiliate yourself by asking for even a small slice. Oh, never fear that a little stove blacking and mother's gingham bib concealed my real identity! Glittering genius such as mine shines through a great many disadvantages where an ordinary personality would be entirely obliterated." Marjorie swung off the big words grandly.

"Mr. Kimble said the *Courier* felt honored to print those verses that you and Dick ridiculed. Oh, you did, you don't need to deny it!—But you see how little you are fit to judge of real worth. That is always the way. Truly great people are always persecuted, and it is only after a great deal of trouble that people come to appreciate them, sometimes not till they are dead. I'm sure I never should have been if the whole world had been like you. But you see that clock, Jane Moxie? Mother'll be here before we've turned around. You've just got to pitch right in and help me straighten up. She's coming this minute! Oh, Jane!" Marjorie looked out of the window helplessly. "Some one is with her. Oh, who is it? It can't be Uncle Alfred. It is! It's Uncle Alfred Allen as sure as you're a foot high."

Marjorie was out of the house and down the walk in a flash, the gingham apron strings flying wildly behind her.

"Yes, it's Uncle Alfred. Who else would it be!" He hugged her up and kissed off half the smutches.

"And I've come to get you this time, haven't I, Mamma Moxie?—Going to carry you away to the city; now, how do you like that?"

"Me?" Marjorie questioned incredulously. It was too big a thought to grasp all at once. It would take "night" and "above."

CHAPTER XIX

FREDERICK ABIJAH MOSES, AND A HANDFUL OF LADY'S SLIPPERS

"It was its being different that made one want it."

"Now try not to be a trial to your Uncle Alfred!" Mother Moxie put an extra pin in Marjorie's belt.

"Remember you're going to a large city!" Jane cautioned. "You don't want to be headstrong."

"You'd better put a string on her, Uncle Alfred!" Dick advised. "You'll never be able to keep track of her, she's such a wiggle-twist."

"Oh, we'll keep together all right, like two magnets. Hey, Marjorie?" He patted her shoulder reassuringly. "Now let's see! Does this go?" He picked up a bulging telescope. "—And this, I suppose, is a bandbox and contains a wonderful flowery creation that we are going to wear to the theatre? All right! Now we're ready, aren't we?"

"Be sure and wear your ginghams and percales on the street, dear! Save your white duck suit for Sunday, and your little blue dimity you may wear special places," Mother Moxie specified. "Your slippers are in there with your best dress and hat, and here are your handkerchiefs. I'll put them in your handbag, a dozen of them. Do you think that will be enough? Try not to lose them all, won't you? Some of them are sister's, but you need so many. And oh, daughter, your comb and brush! I thought I sent you to put them in. You laid them on the organ? Now, we'll have to open the telescope again. I wonder what time it is?"

"Don't get nervous!" Uncle Alfred comforted. "There's plenty of time." He got down on his knees to undo the straps. "Now, is that all? What's in the rocker?"

"Oh, it's my belt! That goes in.—And there's my box of stationery.—My diary too.—I musn't forget that. I shall probably have experiences. Oh, mother! did you get my perfumery? I want it." She tore away up the stairs.

"If she gets homesick," Mother Moxie whispered, "send her back! She's never been away a single night before; I'd hate to think she'd be homesick." There was a suspicious moisture in her pale blue eyes.

"No doubt she will be very homesick." It was Jane's opinion.

"She'll be squally before night, mark my words!" Dick was sure of it.

"I shan't either." Marjorie came down in time to defend herself. "I guess I'm no worse than you are, Dick Moxie. I mean to stay till the last minute, see if

I don't! Don't think I'm so anxious for your society. It'll be you that'll pine away for some one to torment, if any one does. Oh, Dick!" as a storm of reflections swooped upon her. "You'll feed the Appetite, won't you? Whole panfuls! She'll miss me. Nothing will make her forget it except being so full she can't think. —And Catastrophe and all the kittens. Be sure and see that Consolation gets a good deal. And oh, Dick!" She drew him to one side tragically. Mother was whispering to Uncle Alfred and Jane was wrapping red tissue paper around their lunch box.

Marjorie got hold of Dick's collar and drew his head down. "—There's a cat—an old lean ornery cat. She isn't ours, she isn't anybody's. I think she has kittens under Barnby's shed. She prowls around their lot and sometimes she comes over the fence. You'll find a pie tin right in the corner under the alder bush where I feed her. When I'd be going out with a plateful for Catastrophe, she'd meow so pitiful I couldn't help it. She has the awfullest eyes—as big as—as saucers. They'd haunt me if I didn't.—And food is simply nothing to her.—It doesn't last. You'll feed her, won't you, Dicky, dear, all you can spare? And—please don't mention it any more than is absolutely necessary, you understand?" She squeezed his hand. "Oh, I suppose I ought to stay at home and tend to things!" Her face was grave with anxiety.

"And Jane, you'll put out some crumbs for the teenty, weenty mother wren whose mate Catastrophe caught, gluttonous creature! I gave her a severe talking to and took her up to see the three dear little eggs, but I don't suppose it did the least good in the world. There are some people it never pays to reason with. If we neglect the wren now there never will be any precious little birdies, for how can she go for breakfast and sit at the same time, I'd like to know! It's a physical impossibility. I suppose the Mugg twins will miss me terribly. I've been taking them out regularly every single afternoon. It's good for their ringworms.—And the Mintey baby is teething. I don't know which is the worst, to be ringwormy or teething. Teething is terrible. One just has to drool. I wonder what makes a teething baby drool! If I had a baby I shouldn't want it to drool. I believe I would rather it would be toothless. Anyhow, teeth are a great deal of bother and if one hasn't them why they won't have to be pulled and will never ache. And Jane, if Belinda Barks comes around you can let her take my box of patterns. I said she shouldn't but she may. Oh, mother! there's a lot of responsibility in going anywhere, isn't there?—There's so many things to be left behind—and—Oh! Oh!" She was hugging her mother good-bye. "You—you—you'll write to me, won't you?"

"Yes, mother will write and Marjorie must write too." There were tears in everybody's eyes, even

Jane's. Marjorie kissed them all around, then she went back and kissed Mother Moxie again.

"I—I feel as though something was going to—to happen." The words struggled around an aching lump. And then it did. She burst into tears and had to be taken into the kitchen and comforted.

"It—it isn't that I don't want to go. I do," she sobbed. "It's you, and Dick, and Jane—I—I love you so." She was hugging them all again. "—And—and mother, when I'm gone you won't remember all the horrible t—things I've done, will you?—They're so many and—and I didn't mean them. I—I couldn't bear to go away, not for a minute, if it were—really—true; but I'm going to bring you a lovely china pitcher, and father a necktie, and Jane a dear little workbox, and Dick a ball. I can bear it.—I'm going to." She drew herself up. "After all, a week isn't but just a little while, is it?—and we'll have such fun talking it all over." She tried to smile bravely as she locked her arm in Uncle Alfred's. "Anyhow, next to you and father and Dick and Jane I love Uncle Alfred best," she confessed, as she rubbed her wet cheek against his sleeve. They were going down the front walk. Mother picked a lovely pink and pinned it to her dress.

"Now be happy, dear, and have a good time," she said at the gate.

"Be sure and go to the Zoo and see all the animals, the lions and seals and everything."

"I'd go up in the Masonic Temple if I were you," Jane suggested.

"Now, good-bye, good-bye!" Dick waved a big red bandana and mother a hand. Marjorie showed a contorted face in a vain effort to smile back at them. She squeezed Uncle Alfred's arm desperately. She was leaving them behind. Oh, there! Jane was hid. She could just see a part of mother's head. There! they were out of sight. She slipped a helpless little hand down Uncle Alfred's sleeve till it found his big warm hand and felt comforted. Neither spoke until they were nearly to the station. Uncle Alfred had struggled over lumps in the days of his youth and was thinking about them. He helped his little niece up the station steps and arranged all the bundles before he went to buy the tickets.

It was to be a long, long journey. They would not even be there by dinner time. Never in her life had Marjorie gone farther than Selville on the train and then only once to the circus. Her heart beat tumultuously as she heard the train whistle. Only a minute now and it would come spinning in, puffing and yellow, blowing its white breath out from under. Everybody hurried excitedly out to the platform jostling bundles and umbrellas. One old lady dropped a shoebox of lunch and green cucumber pickles flew in every direction. Marjorie wanted to stop and help gather them up, but Uncle Alfred hurried her along. —Up the platform—Oh there! she was stepping on somebody. They were aboard at last. It was a beautiful car, all lovely agate green windows and rich red woodwork trimmed with gold. The seats were red plush. It was just as nice as the one Jane had gone to the state fair in and she had talked about it for a week. There were cunning little looking-glasses between each seat where you could see if your hat was on straight if you wanted to, and a big fine one at the end of the car. It was amusing to look in that and wonder which was you, and see how much more interesting one looked when there were a lot of others. Her dress was pretty anyhow,—such a cheerful red, and made suspender, with the dearest little red pearl buttons, and the ribbon on her sailor just matched to a dot.

Ever so many people were going somewhere. The little girl two seats ahead was going to the country. She was telling another girl about it, and she seemed just as pleased as she, Marjorie, who was going to the city. It didn't matter at all where she was going. It was its being different that made one want it. The little girl had never seen a cow or a sheep. Think of that! She was going to have real eggs that hens laid and her grandmama would let her gather them. Once they had bought a hen for Thanksgiving and they had kept it shut in a box for a week hoping she would lay but she didn't. It would be such a treat to have a real hen-laid egg. Her grandmama had potatoes and cabbages and apples growing out of doors. Once she and her little sister had planted an apple which had cost five cents; but it never grew any more, though they dug it up every morning to see; finally they dug it up and ate it, because if they hadn't, you know, some one else would. She had never picked a strawberry in her life or seen any popcorn growing. She hadn't any idea what it looked like before it was all white and fluffy and in sacks. She didn't even know what a cob was.

Marjorie's attention radiated between the little girl and a large family across the aisle that had a baby. The mother was trying her best to keep it still. She hadn't had half time to do her hair, Marjorie felt sure of that. It was on one side, and the hairpins were in every way. There was a great ugly part in the back where there oughtn't to be. The baby kept pulling it and making it look worse every minute. He liked to kick pretty well but he loved to pull hair better. He took great handfuls and just pulled till he was red in the face.

The father sat across from them holding a wriggling small boy, using all his attention to keep him from picking the brass buttons off his first pants. They must be his first pants for they hadn't scarcely any legs at all, and if they'd been much smaller there couldn't have been anything of them but the band. And he had just lost his curls. There were ugly gouges across his head where the shears had nipped them off. Probably he had wiggled so nobody could cut it, and they had had to snatch a curl here and there whenever they had a chance. A little boy, probably six years old, sat beside them and a great many things ailed him. The band of his new hat "picked" and he didn't like to wear his collar. His shoes hurt his feet. He whined and fretted and sometimes he pinched his little brother for spite.

Across from him, beside her mother, sat a little girl four years old daubing candy all over herself. She had her face covered and now she had begun on her dress. In a minute more she would have her eyes stuck together and then she couldn't see to get into any more mischief. It must be a great trial to travel with such a family. They weren't still a minute. When one stopped crying another was ready to commence. There were enough of them to keep up a continual performance. When they weren't crying they were teasing their mother for cookies. There was a big market basket full of lunch under the seat, but even then it didn't seem as though it could last long. Perhaps they weren't going far. It surely seemed as though they hadn't had cookies at home or they wouldn't have had such an appetite for them.

Perhaps the woman had just baked up a whole crock of them "special purpose." It couldn't be they ate that way all the time or they would have had indigestion. Perhaps they had and that was what made them cry.

There now! the baby had torn the woman's waist. He was clawing the lace all off her collar. Oh, what a poor abused woman! Marjorie clapped her hands to attract the baby's attention. It was a shame to let him dig in that way. Why didn't somebody stop him. Why didn't the father! Marjorie pinched Uncle Alfred's arm.

"I think I ought to do what I can," she whispered. "If the whole four have torn at her like that, think how near she must be to going to pieces! Oh, now he has her by the throat! He's choking her to death. See! She's red in the face already. Uncle Alfred, do you think between us we could—could manage him? She really ought to have a breathing spell, don't you think so? Think of having a baby digging you like that for six years! That's what it means.—One beginning right where the other left off. If—If I had some peppermints I believe I could manage it." They watched for the newsboy to bring around his basket.

"Peppermints are what they usually get, aren't they?" Marjorie inquired anxiously. "They haven't catnip drops, have they?" The baby, despairing of ever finishing its mother by strangulation, had begun upon her nose. This he seemed to consider a serious blemish, and bent all his energies toward removing it at once.

"I don't believe in whipping children," Marjorie whispered to Uncle Alfred, "—but there are cases when I believe I should try a mild spatting, wouldn't you?—Just a little, say on the hands or—or ears. Even babies ought to be human. Oh, look now, Uncle Alfred! He's eating her up!—Great mouthfuls all over her cheek! Do you suppose that he has teeth? I should imagine when he grew up he would be a—a cannibal." She touched the woman's arm timidly.

"I wouldn't mind trying him. He seems very—very active. You must be tired."

"Oh, no!" The little woman sighed with all the patience in the world. "I'm used to it." Indeed she looked it. "I'm afraid he wouldn't be good with you." She looked wistfully at Marjorie's childish figure.

"He might. Please let me try!" Marjorie grew more sympathetic every moment. "There are the Mugg babies, I handle them most every day. They're active too, only I don't believe they are quite so much so. Is he teething?"

"Yes, he has two." The mother pinched the tiny lips apart and displayed two shining pearls proudly. "Mother's little tootsy-wootsy dumpling! Did he show his little teenty toofies to the lady?" She squeezed him up tenderly.

"He's a pretty baby," Marjorie said haltingly. "What is his name?"

"Frederick Abijah Moses. We named him after his two grandfathers. Does little Freddie want to go?" she cooed coaxingly. "He's a little man. There!" She relinquished him with a sigh of relief. Marjorie bore him away with an air of grave responsibility. He squirmed and wiggled so he reminded her of the one kitten she couldn't hold. He wasn't the cuddley sort at all. It was much easier to hold a cuddley baby as well as a cuddley kitten. Marjorie tried to snuggle him up to her in a dear, motherly fashion, but it wasn't any use at all. He struggled himself free and reached up both his hands to get her crimson hat streamers. He got them too, and straightway put them into his little wet open mouth, dabbling them about in Marjorie's neck, then swallowing them again. He danced up and down in his dear little blue kid shoes till Marjorie's arms ached with boosting him; still he insisted that she keep on and on. She must boost him up clear of the landing and she must say "boo" every time he came down. Nothing else would satisfy him. Across the aisle his mother smiled at him indulgently. "Goo-goo! Goo-goo!" she said, tossing her head mechanically after the habit of years.

"See here, baby!" Marjorie tried to find the joints in his little body. "Pretty pictures! Baby want to see the pretty pictures in Uncle Alfred's paper? Oh, there's a horsie! Baby want to see a horsie?"

"Goo, goo! Goo, goo!" Little Freddie plunged into it enthusiastically.

"—Funny red horsie with blue feet," Marjorie went on. "—And a dear little go-wagon to take baby for a ride. Baby want to go for a ride in the dear little go-wagon? Oh, see here!" as baby failed to show any interest in horses and wagons, but seemed intent on getting as much of the gay-colored page in his mouth as possible.

"Here's a little doggie-woggie and a boy. Isn't he a dear little fellow in his Buster Brown suit? Will Freddie grow up to be a cute little fellow like that and wear pants? Freddie mustn't eat the paper. No, no! It's a horrid, nasty paper, and will make Freddie sick. See! Here's a Foxy Grandpa. Let's see what those horrid boys are doing this time. No, no! Freddie mustn't pull off the pretty buttons! Did he think they were candy? Does Freddie want some candy?" She produced a lovely pink peppermint. "There! That's prettier than buttons. Baby can eat it all he wants to. Now Freddie'll be a good boy, won't he?"

But if being quiet and eating it were any signs of being good Freddie had no intentions of anything so docile. He put the pink morsel into his mouth only to take it out and dabble it in the dust along the car seat, then pat little pink daubs all over the window pane; at last, with nothing left of it but a sticky hand, he caressed Marjorie's cheek tenderly. In vain she tried to hold him quiet long enough to wipe away the stains. He kicked and fought desperately.

"Baby must hold still and let Marjorie clean him up. See! he's getting it all over his clean dress." But baby had no respect for clean dresses and protested with all his small might. He battled the air, Marjorie, anything that came in his way, with fists of defiance. At last he stiffened his little body and screamed at the top of his voice. Marjorie looked over at his mother anxiously; but that weary lady had availed herself of a much-needed opportunity and lain down, with the baby's little blue coat for a pillow, and gone to sleep. The father slept too, and so did the little boy who had grown tired of trying to pick off his brass buttons. Two seats away the other two children were fighting over the remainder of the cookies. They seemed to be too accustomed to the sound of screaming babies to even look around.

"There! there!" Marjorie patted him on the back. "Don't cry! Marjorie won't wash him any more. Didn't baby want to be clean? Want to be a dirty little baby? Well, he shall. He's a dear little tootsy-wootsy. There! Don't cry! Want another candy?" She took another from the sack. "—Another nice little sweety-weety candy for baby Freddie?" But an angry baby hand threw it into the aisle.

"Oh, look out the window at the bossies! See the pretty trees and the little stream!—And there's some funny white ducks. Oh, baby! See there!" She tapped repeatedly on the window pane; but the baby limbs grew more rigid, and the screams increased. Marjorie looked helplessly at Uncle Alfred, but he too was asleep behind his paper. In vain she emptied the contents of her hand bag—a little red leather purse, a tiny mirror, an acorn stamp box. She offered them all to the baby, only to be despised. Repeatedly she boosted him up and said "boo" when he came down. She snuggled him up and rocked to and fro soothingly, singing a little ditty that had pleased the Mugg babies; but he refused to be comforted.

"Baby want a drink?"

The train was slowing for a station. In desperation Marjorie carried him to the end of the car. The cooling draught had some effect, but he began again as soon as he could get his breath. Marjorie held him to the window to look out. It was only a great red tank with dripping sides, and a white fence, and beyond, a lovely woods and a green field and a little dot of a house at the farthest end. Marjorie danced little Freddie up and down before the view entreatingly.

"Oh! see the pretty flowers!" she begged. There they were just across the tracks, pink lady's slippers, dozens of them. "Freddie want a flower? Right down there, baby! Oh, did you ever see such lovely pink beauties, all blossomed out for baby Freddie? Does baby want to go by-by and pick pretty flowers?" The word "by-by" acted like magic. The sobs ceased. The little hands reached up entreatingly.

"See the pretty white clouds! Hear the old big choo-choo car blowing its nose!" In vain she tried to divert his attention. "Oh, baby! there's a birdie, lit right in that little bush! Baby see the birdie?" But baby Freddie resisted manfully. He battered the pane in a heroic effort to get out. His face that had cleared began to cloud again. The thick little upper lip lifted in a fresh grievance. Marjorie jigged him up and down despairingly. He was going to cry. He was puckering up to get ready. Then! the noise was coming and he had had a good rest and could cry louder.

"Don't, don't!" Marjorie begged entreatingly. "You mustn't cry so, you'll scare everybody to death. Do you want them to think you're a perfect monster? You just mustn't make such a noise. I shan't allow it." She put her hand over the baby's mouth; but the noise burst out in spasmodic jets that threatened strangulation.

"Marjorie'd be glad to get Freddie a flower, only the bad, naughty old train wouldn't let us off. I don't see why it don't start along, anyhow. It don't need to stand all day, does it, just to take on a little water?

Goodness knows I'd take you out if I could! I'm sure the folks would be glad enough to see us going." By this time the small monarch had screamed himself black in the face. Marjorie, driven to desperation, carried him to the car door. A fat, agreeable man, was standing there smoking a cigar. He poked a pudgy finger into Freddie's ribs and chucked him under the chin, but it didn't do the least good in the world.

"How long is this train going to stop?" Marjorie questioned miserably.

"Oh, a good while. Probably fifteen minutes," the man told her as he moved along toward the smoking car. Two boys came out and hopped off confidently. The flowers were just a little ways. She looked over at them wistfully. It wouldn't take her but a jiffy. If it would only keep Freddie quiet. My! how he could scream! Fifteen minutes was a long time. She could go ever so far in fifteen minutes. She clambered quickly down with an apprehensive look behind. A fresh burst of white steam came from under the engine, but it gave her no special alarm. The flowers were just over the white fence and on a little slope. In a moment she was there. Freddie once outside hushed his crying and began to coo his satisfaction.

The flowers were beautiful, a lovely pink, blotched with red. She picked one and put it in the chubby little hand, then another and another. She was just stooping for the fourth when the monster behind her gave a lunge. There was a puff, a grating of wheels, then a succession of puffs gradually increasing in volume as the train gained speed. Oh, it was moving! Marjorie turned a horrified face to behold it. For a moment she stood stupefied, then it suddenly dawned on her. They were being left, they were. With all her might she cried to them to stop. She snatched off her hat and waved the crimson streamers frantically. They were not going to back up. They were not going to turn around. Relentlessly the great black wheels chugged on and on. One, two, three, four, the coaches passed, then the little fluttering flag behind. The great yellow monster nosed its way around the bend and out of sight. Marjorie sank down helplessly among the lady's slippers and gathered Freddie into her arms.

CHAPTER XX

AUNT MANDY, UNCLE EBENEZER, AND THE GOLDEN CALF.

"It don't seem as though God would have made more things than could live on the earth, does it?"

Save for a pair of bobolinks that had a nest in the lady's slippers, they were quite alone. No one had been to the red tank to watch the heaving monster come or go. There was nothing to show that it had been save a few smoking cinders from the fire box, and a wet track where the thirsty engine had taken on water. With little Freddie hugged up as if to protect him from impending evil Marjorie paced to and fro along the track where a moment ago the waiting coaches had stood with their hundreds of crowded windows beaming encouragingly. Now there was nothing facing her but emptiness and desolation. It was hard to realize that the train had really gone. It seemed, if she closed her eyes, she must open them to see it standing just as it was, waiting to take her and Freddie on. But no. Away around the bend it was whistling now and the chug-chug of the laboring engine grew fainter every moment. It was gone. Uncle Alfred was gone. The baby's mother was gone. They were left. Oh, what could she do!

A wave of terror and her own helplessness almost swept her brave spirit down. What would the woman do when she awoke and found she hadn't any baby? What would Uncle Alfred do? No one had seen them get off save the fat man and perhaps he never would tell. He probably was asleep before now the same as everybody else, and they would go on, and on, and on. Perhaps no one would ever know what had become of them. She ran terrified along the track, crying out in little frightened gasps. Her eyes followed the two shining rails away, it seemed, into eternity. Then, because she was weak and trembling, she sat down on a disused tie and rocked to and fro miserably.

Little Freddie fretted and kicked mighty kicks with his little blue shoes and sucked a pink fist in desperation. They didn't even have anything to eat. The lovely box of lunch that Jane had taken such pains to wrap with red tissue paper was in the wire parcel rack over Uncle Alfred's head, and the woman's basket of cookies, if there was one of them left, was getting farther away every minute. It didn't matter about her. She wouldn't starve. She could eat roots, or—or grass if she had to; but how could a baby, with only two teeth and they only just beginning? She put an investigating finger into the little pink mouth to test their substantiality, and the baby tongue closed around it greedily.

"Oh, you poor little thing!" Marjorie rocked faster. "You're starving already. You'd eat me up if you could. You're trying it. Oh, don't you know baby, you can't digest my finger? You *can't.* I wish you could; but it's impossible. It's too hard. You can't eat anything but your mother as I know of, and she's gone. Yes, she is. There isn't any use crying over spilled milk. I guess you wish you'd been a little more carefuller of her now. After all it serves you right, you know it does. When a person has a good thing and don't appreciate it, it is usually taken away from them. We can't go on abusing our privileges. We aren't allowed to. I guess you'll think your mother was a privilege before you're done with it, and you abused her, you know you did. If you ever live to grow up, which I don't think you will," she added disparagingly, "I hope you'll remember this. You have a great many things to account for already. If it hadn't been for you we would be tooting along on that train this minute, with not a thing in the world the matter with us, while here we are now in a beautiful plight, aren't we—a thousand miles from nowhere and no way to get out, and not a thing in the world to eat. Supposing a great big bear would pounce out of those woods right now! I'd let him have you first; I ought to. You've caused a good deal of trouble and you'll probably go on causing more. You were bound to have a flower. I gave up to you. Your mother's always done it and I thought I had to; but I've learned a lesson. If I ever have any children of my own I shall be firm and stick to my convictions. They will get consoled with something besides cookies occasionally, I'm thinking—something that will be better for both their tempers and digestions.

"Don't you dare to cry another word! Do you hear, sir, Frederick Abijah Moses? Don't you *dare!*" as the tiny face puckered around the disappointing finger. "You've been nuisance enough for one day, and you just hush up now and behave yourself. If you don't I believe I shall experiment on you, I really do. Of course you're hungry and there's a great many things ailing you; but you might as well learn to endure misfortune first as last. Now, there comes a man, and if you don't hush I'll give you to him. He'll probably be able to tend to your case without the least trouble. Look there! He's got a big knife. Now will you hush? You'd better," as the wailing grew less. One of the section hands, with a scythe over his shoulder, was swinging along the track on his way in to dinner. Marjorie accosted him anxiously.

"When does the next train go north?" Of course there would be another train; but Uncle Alfred wouldn't be on it, nor her ticket, nor the baby's mother. What good it would do her she didn't know, still she asked.

"The flyer goes up about four-forty-five." The man squinted one eye curiously. "Going out?"

"Yes, that is, I guess I will. Oh, say, Mister!" He was moving on. She hurried to overtake him. "Isn't there some one around here who sells milk? I'd like to get a pint if you please." She still carried her hand bag.

"The dairy business you mean? I don't know's ther' is. There's dairyin' done over at Mayerses Center, three miles away." The children weren't any of his kinsfolk. He searched them for familiarities. They weren't Days nor Chesterfields nor Kinneys. He wasn't interested.

"Well, isn't there a cow, then?" Marjorie was persistent. "If you could tell me where I could get a cow. This is country, isn't it? There ought to be a cow in the country. I don't know as I could get the milk out of her, but I could try. This child is starving," she said tragically, thrusting the wailing Freddie into prominence. "He's lost his mother and he hasn't but two teeth." She pinched the little mouth to prove her statement. "So, of course, you see something must be done."

"Oh, if you want a little milk for the kid you just go to that house over yonder and Aunt Mandy'll fix you up." He pointed a grimy thumb at the dot of a farmhouse away across the fields. "Jest cut across the medder and int' the cornfield. 'Tain't more'n a mile."

Marjorie heaved a sigh of relief. The prospect of carrying Freddie a mile wasn't any laughing matter; but it was better than sitting helplessly by and watching the increasing symptoms of starvation in an infant victim, and four-forty-five was a long way in the foreground. There was no telling what might happen by then. Babies were almost always eating or else crying to. If he didn't die of starvation he would probably burst something. Why, if it hadn't been for his arms, he would have swallowed both his hands already. He had swallowed them several times, but because they were fast at one end he could unswallow them. And he was glad that he could, because he needed them to strike with. There! One was clear out of sight now, wrist and all. Marjorie drew it back fearfully.

"Baby, baby!" she begged. "You mustn't do it, you mustn't really. It would be foolish to eat yourself up and besides give you a terrible feeling. Think what it would mean to go through life maimed—a poor little stump of an arm for instance, as monument to your terrible gluttony. I think if I had such an ungovernable appetite as that I would try to control it. Shall we go way over and find a bossy cow and get a dear good woman to give us a cup of milk? Will you promise to be a good baby and not kick?

If you kick I can't carry you. You don't look a mite bigger than Josephine Murl; but you're certainly lots heavier. That's because you're not hollow. You may feel as if you were, but you're not. You're the biggest baby I ever lifted for your size. It seems as though you must be full of something besides just baby. I guess it's temper. If there was such a thing as temper's weighing I'd say you weighed a ton. Do you realize if you keep on like this till you're a man you'll be simply terrible? There won't a soul in the world even live in the same house with you, to say nothing of loving you. If you kick me once more, Frederick Moses, I shall walk right off and leave you in the fence corner. A body might as well try to carry a menagerie."

Over the meadow and across a little meadow stream, under a lichened rail fence where sleepy sheep drowsed in the shady corners, on into the cornfield. Marjorie stumbled to a friendly rock and sank down helplessly. She was out of breath. Her hair was flying. The baby's bonnet had slid down miserably over its eyes. She straightened it desperately.

"I'm sure I don't know what I'm going to do with you. You've gnawed at my finger till it's sore. You shan't gnaw it another minute, not if you starve, so there! Here! Marjorie will fix something for the baby; course she will. Shall Marjorie fix the baby a sweet little sugar-tootsy out of her own little clean kerchie? There, there! Don't cry! Little Dewey and Hobson Mugg dearly love them. Mrs. Mugg fixes one every day. I'd forgot all about it. There! there! You'll soon have something you can't swallow. If you get all that in your mouth I guess you'll keep still for a minute."

She wadded a clean handkerchief and tied it into a knot. It certainly did go a long ways toward filling the baby's mouth. "You can kick now, but you can't holler, thank goodness. Maybe I'll be able to stand one without the other." She started on her way again persistently.

Groping blindly through green rows of corn that waved feathery tassels high over her head, then on through a field of sweet pink clover, into an orchard, the smell of whose ripening fruit tormented her hunger, Marjorie came upon the farmhouse, quaint and weather-beaten, in the shelter of the trees. A path, beaten black and bordered with zinnias and marigolds, led up to the little south porch, that at once looked homelike and inviting, with its morning-glories twined up to the thatch and its row of bright tin pans sunning on the bench. A big black cat lay asleep on a little cushion by the door. He got up and arched his back and purred.

Marjorie's timid little knock brought "Aunt Mandy," wiping the soapsuds from her hands on a big gingham apron. She had been washing hanks of wool and a snowy pile of them was heaped up in the kitchen sink. Her big homely face was full of concern.

"Do tell!" she exclaimed over Marjorie's excited story. "Got left off! What a shame! And the baby's mother—Oh, the poor innocent little darling! Give him here!" Marjorie relinquished him to the motherly arms gladly. "Starving, is he, and no wonder! Why, child, what have you got in this little lamb's mouth?"

"Mrs. Mugg makes them. She has twins," Marjorie explained. "It don't seem to me they would be very nourishing; but babies seem to like them." Aunt Mandy sat down in the crazy-cushioned rocker and laughed till the little kitchen shook.

"Bless her heart! She did the best she could," she comforted, patting Marjorie consolingly. "You see there's something to it besides a handkerchief! But how could she put in bread and milk and sugar when she didn't have it! There, there! Never mind! The little pet will be all right in two jerks of a lamb's tail in fly time. He shall have a cup of nice warm milk and forget all about it, so he shall."

She took off the little crocheted bonnet and smoothed the little bald head consolingly. "Wants his own muzzer, course he does; but he's going to sit in Aunt Mandy's lap and eat bread and milk like a little man." She laid him on an old fashioned settee covered with cheery red calico, and bustled into the pantry, jarring the little house with every step of her gaitered feet. She had the milk on the stove and it was warm in a minute, and Freddie was eating it with grunts of appreciation.

"The man said it would stop fifteen minutes—and we weren't only just out—and it never whistled at all—and ever so many people were looking out of the windows—and I waved my hat and everything and they never even stopped." Marjorie poured her grievances before a sympathetic listener. "—And all the lunch is in the parcel rack—and Uncle Alfred is asleep—and so is the baby's mother—and my ticket is on—and whatever the poor woman will do without a baby is more than I know. It seems to me after six years it would have grown to be a habit. I thought the woman needed a breathing spell. I don't see how she can miss one so very much, but of course she will. Mothers always do." Marjorie sighed.

"Poor little tudkins!" Aunt Mandy swayed to and fro and held him to her big motherly bosom. "Does he want nice clean coaties and go by-by? Well, he shall have some, so he shall. Little tug-o-mutton needn't cry no more. He's going to get mothered, so he is, and Aunt Mandy'll rock him to sleep and sing 'By-low Bumpkins.' Shall she?

"By-low Bumpkins, iddle diddle Dumpkins,
Jogging along with a big load of pumpkins,
A big fat toad bumped into the load
And away went the pumpkins a-rolling down the road.

Ho! Ho! by-low-low,
Who got the pumpkins? I don't know."

She jolted him along merrily in time to the rollicking rhythm. He seemed to enjoy it. He cooed and clapped his hands.

"There, now, he's just as comfy as a tater in the cellar, and he's goin' to cuddle down and shut his pretty eyes." She smoothed his little fuzzy head and rubbed cunning wrinkles in his baby neck where the bonnet strings had left them red.

"Ho! Ho! by-low-low
Teach Mr. Bumpkins to go a little slow,
Ho! Ho! by-low-low
Who cares a tinker where the old pumpkins go!

"Did they most starve the little man, and poke a nassy old rag in his mouth? Well, Aunt Mandy won't let 'em do it any more. She'll take off the little feller's shoes and toast his tootsies, so she will. He needn't fuss any more. It's going t' clear up, so it is, and be a fair day to-morrow.

"By-low Bumpkins, iddle diddle Dumpkins."

At last the little tense body relaxed in her lap and Freddie slept. She carried him over to the red lounge and covered him with a little checked red and black shawl.

"—And we were going to stay a whole week—and

Uncle Alfred meant to take me to the theatre—and my best hat is in a bandbox and my slippers and my white piqué dress for Sundays—and Dick and Jane said I'd be homesick, but I shan't—I don't mean to—that is, I shouldn't have been if things had gone off as they ought to." Marjorie choked over her bread and honey. "—Of course it is rather aggravating to have things turn out like this, and—and I don't see how I'm going to go without a ticket, do you?—and how ever will I get home to—to *mother!*"

The last word burst out with a flood of pent up emotions, and she laid her head on the red cotton tablecloth and wept. As long as there had been something she could do she had borne up bravely; but now that a temporary stopping place had been reached, she wilted miserably, and was gathered up by motherly Aunt Mandy, who rocked her just as she had rocked little Freddie, only she did not sing, "By-low Bumpkins;" instead she smoothed the rumpled brown braid and straightened the wrinkles out of Marjorie's best hair ribbons.

"Never mind, dearie! Never mind! There'll be some way. We'll ask Ebenezer." She seemed to feel so sure Ebenezer would know a way, that Marjorie felt comforted in spite of herself.

He came in presently with a pail of purple plums and sat in the chintz rocker while Aunt Mandy told him all about it. He was a big good-natured man with catsup-colored whiskers. He seemed to fill the simple little kitchen. He certainly did fill the chintz rocker to overflowing. He was smiling when he came in and he kept right on through the whole narrative, such a comfortable assuring smile that Marjorie did not wonder Aunt Mandy had perfect confidence in him. He crossed and uncrossed his big boots while he listened and rubbed a finger reflectively over his bald spot.

When it was through he tiptoed across to look at the sleeping baby, ejaculating "Well, well!" at regular intervals. Marjorie forgot to be serious and giggled outright to see him going. He was so big and clumsy and his boots were such a trial to him. "Well, well!" he said again, as he stooped to examine the baby's little foot that had kicked out from under the cover. He touched it with a big finger as though he half doubted its being a real flesh and blood baby. "Got left off by No. 6! Well, well!" After sitting for a while with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands he thought it all out as Aunt Mandy said he would.

"Why just as soon as they miss you they'll inquire of everybody on the train of course, and they'll find where you got off, and then they'll telegraph the next train to stop and take you on, with direction as to where you are going, and where to leave the baby. We'll go down to the four-forty-five and you see if the conductor don't know all about it. Don't you fret. Things'll straighten out all right by and by."

"That's what I told 'er. They most always do if we only give 'em time." Aunt Mandy tied one of her own big checked aprons on Marjorie and put her in the big rocking-chair with a plate of plums. "Now rest easy and enjoy yourself," she advised. "You don't want to make yourself miserable for nothing. You've heard about the man that bumped his head on a rock? Anyhow Uncle Ebenezer and Aunt Mandy will take care of you both."

Indeed they both seemed equal to any emergency. Marjorie found herself taking hope in spite of her convictions. The plums were good—big, juicy fellows, covered with a silver frost that rubbed off when you touched them. They cut a watermelon, too, that had been in the spring and was crisp and cool. Uncle Ebenezer wrapped up some of the seeds in a brown paper for her to take home. She went to the spring house with Aunt Mandy and watched her work over butter and press out dear little patties with a sheaf of wheat on top. She had a drink of delicious cold milk, too, and a slice of Aunt Mandy's curd cheese.

Uncle Ebenezer took her to the barn to see the dozen pink pigs that weren't a week old, and Aunt Mandy's flock of thoroughbred Plymouth Rocks. They were all sizes, big, little, pinfeathery, and downy, and they flew in Uncle Ebenezer's lap and on his head, even pecking at the spatters of milk on his big boots. He took her to the pasture bars to pet the Clyde colt and gave her a handful of bran for the dear little velvet-nosed bossie calf that wanted to kiss her hand. It was such a lovely fawney yellow, with soft brown eyes like a timid deer, and a dear little white star right in the middle of its forehead.

"Oh, you lovely, lovely creature!" Marjorie hugged it rapturously. "You look as though you were carved of pure gold. Oh, what is her name?" she inquired eagerly. "It seems to me I should love to call her Golden. Don't you think that would be appropriate? What do you call her?"

"Just Bossy. You see we're raising her for veal," Uncle Ebenezer explained awkwardly.

"Oh!" A spasm passed over Marjorie's face.

"Yes, she's extra good size. She'll bring, say seven dollars in the market. She's taking on flesh fast." Marjorie stood up and looked with horrified eyes into Uncle Ebenezer's placid countenance; and somehow it never looked the same to her after that. She felt the terrible sinking pain one must always feel when a cherished ideal crashes to earth. "Don't you think she's rather pretty to—to k-kill?" she faltered.

"Oh, I don't know! They're all pretty." Uncle Ebenezer looked at her thoughtfully. "She's a pretty calf all right. There isn't anything like the Jerseys to my notion."

"She—she's so l-little," Marjorie plead.

"Six weeks old to-morrow. Yes, I 'lowed we could let the butcher have 'er, say about a week from Monday. She'll be prime then." A little soft nose touched Marjorie's hand appealingly. She fell on her knees beside it, all forgetful of the spongy ground, and threw her arms about the silky throat.

"Darling! Darling!" she whispered in the dainty tufted ears. "Darling! Darling!" Away over in the field a cow bawled anxiously.

"That's her mother, old Moll," Uncle Ebenezer said. "She's a good cow. She has fine calves. She's brought me in a good bit of money. Beef is away up." He rested his foot on the second rail, and jingled a few coins in his pocket meditatively. For a moment Marjorie knelt helplessly, her face pressed close to the little panting side, then she rose with flashing eyes.

"It—it seems to me if a cow is good and—and gives milk—" she hesitated for words. It was such a very serious moment. "—she ought to be allowed to keep her children. It—it must be terrible to see them dragged off to the butchers. Oh, it is! It's the terriblest thing in the world." Her eyes were dangerously bright, and a red spot flamed up in either cheek.

"You needn't tell me they don't feel; they do. Their hearts break. Didn't you hear her just now? Her bawl said just as plain as could be, 'Oh, what are you going to do with my baby?' If you heard it, if you knew—Oh, how can you go on? How can you!" She went and stood close to Uncle Ebenezer, her hands clenched into a passionate knot, the calf clinging to her side. "If I was mean enough to do such a thing I could never look the poor mother in the face again, never! Do you think I'd have drunk a drop of that milk if I'd known? I'd have starved first." The two tears that had been gathering rolled slowly down and fell. Marjorie laid a hand warm with promises on the golden head. She might fail, but she would try.

"Think how you'd feel if it was your only child!" she insisted. "It isn't any laughing matter to be made into steak and roast and—and sausage, I should say it was rather—serious."

"It has to be done," Uncle Ebenezer defended. "When disagreeable things have to be done we don't think of them any more than we have to."

"That's just it, you simply don't *dare* to think of it. Your conscience wouldn't let you do it, if you did, any more than it would me. It's just because you shut your eyes to the awfulness of it that you can do it at all. After you've murdered her and named her a whole lot of things that she isn't, then people will buy her. Do you suppose if people really knew what she was—if they had to go in and ask for a piece of old Moll's only child for instance—? Oh, when you know how awful it is how can you, *can* you do it?"

"Well, what would you do with them now?" Uncle Ebenezer crossed his blue shirt sleeves meditatively. "Let's hear your views." Marjorie's vehemence interested him. "There's Roxy's calf and Calico's calf and old Moll's. If I raised 'em that would be three more cows. I couldn't milk six cows, I'd have to hire a man. Next year there'd be six more, that would make twelve. That's a little too much stock for forty acres; what do you think? It takes a slather of stuff to feed twelve head. They'd be eatin' us out of house and home." Marjorie looked troubled.

"It seems as though the world is big enough," she said helplessly. "Everything ought to have enough to eat; I don't know just how. There must be a way. It don't seem as though God would make more things than could live on earth, does it? And it don't seem as though He would make things to feel and suffer and know, if it was right to kill them in cold blood. Oh, it's wrong somewhere, I know it is. If such terrible things had to be done, why were things made to feel? Uncle Ebenezer," she persisted, laying a hot little hand in his palm. "Isn't God good and doesn't he say: 'Even the least of these?' Oh, it isn't right! It may have to be done; but it isn't right. Do you suppose He made a mistake? Maybe He didn't calculate right."

Uncle Ebenezer smiled softly to himself and grew serious by turns as he carried a few armfuls of bright oat chaff into the chicken coop for new nests. "Do you suppose God made a mistake!"

When she was alone Marjorie sank down again and hugged and petted the golden calf. She ran her hands caressingly up and down the delicate limbs and patted the sleek sides. Her tears moistened the silken hair at the throat. She poured her sympathy into the dainty listening ears. Suddenly she stood up, her face growing bright with a new thought. Kissing a vow on the white star she went to find Uncle Ebenezer. He was shelling corn off in his hand to feed the setting hens.

"How much does it cost to keep say, one calf a year?" she questioned hopefully. Uncle Ebenezer took off his hat and ran his hand through his hair with slow deliberation.

"Well, say for the fodder and throwin' in summer pasture, five dollars a head. That's a close figure."

"Five dollars—and one, two, three, four, say four years. Four times five is twenty." She caught hold of Uncle Ebenezer's sleeve excitedly. "How much did you say she was worth for—for v-veal?"

"Well, I counted on gettin' seven dollars for 'er if I keep her a week or such a matter," Uncle Ebenezer replied doubtfully.

"Twenty and seven is twenty-seven. Do you think you could trust me for four years, Uncle Ebenezer?" Marjorie was desperately serious. "You see I'm thirteen. In four years I'll be seventeen and able to earn a great deal of money. I mean to be a partner with father, or perhaps I shall be a writer or an artist; but anyhow I shall have money, and if you'll only trust me, I'd like to buy her if you please." Uncle Ebenezer dropped the empty corncob and put his hands into his pockets.

"Meanwhile what do you calculate to do with her?" he queried.

"Why, I'll leave her here, of course, at five dollars a year." Marjorie showed that her plans were not without foundation. "You set your own price, didn't you? Well, when I'm seventeen I can come and take her off your hands, can't I? You'll have all that money then—twenty-seven dollars, and perhaps I'll pay you interest." Uncle Ebenezer took out his knife and sat down on a crate and began to whittle.

"Uh-huh! Uh-huh!" he kept saying. "Got a business head on her all right. What did you say I was to do with the calves? You see in a couple of years there'll likely be two of her."

"Oh!" Marjorie was overwhelmed. "So soon? Well, if there is, you will please keep that too. I guess I shan't mind seven dollars more," she sighed heavily. She was getting in deep water. "You see I am going to commence thinking about the future very soon. Of course, while I am visiting the city I shan't do much, but just as soon as I am home I shall plan my career.

Which do you think would be the most paying, to be an authoress or an artist, or go in business with father? It isn't a very large business though it's thriving. I guess that would be surest, don't you? though I'm afraid Mr. Kimble will be disappointed if I'm not an authoress. I should hate to disappoint Mr. Kimble, he's been very kind to me; but if I undertake two cows on top of all my other responsibilities I shall have to use a great deal of judgment, shan't I? She seems to think a great deal of me now; do you think she will have forgotten me entirely in the four years?"

"What's the matter of coming once a year and sort o' reminding her," Uncle Ebenezer suggested. "See here! I'll keep the calf for you all right, providing you agree to take her off my hands in four years and with one provision, that you come once a year to see Aunt Mandy and me and sort o' round up your stock, you know." He looked quizzically over his spectacles at the quaint little figure on the tool box.

"Oh, I'd love to, but perhaps mother won't let me. Will you put in a second provision, that if mother will let me?"

"Well, I guess we'll have to do that," amended Uncle Ebenezer. "We have to mind our mothers."

"Yes, we *do*."

"And if you can't come why we'll excuse you; but you really ought to come once a year."

"Yes, I ought. It's lovely here. I'm sure she'll be desperately happy. Oh, who is that coming up the lane! It's Uncle Alfred. Oh, it is! It *is!*" She ran and threw herself into his arms excitedly. Sure enough it was. He had gotten off at the first station after he had missed her and caught the return express. They were going to take the four-forty-five back and little Freddie was to be put off at Simpsonville where an anxious mamma would be awaiting him with outstretched arms. Marjorie drew a long breath of relief. Already things had straightened themselves out.

CHAPTER XXI

CITY EXPERIENCE AND GETTING HOME

"I don't want to live where I get so hard and wicked I can't feel. I'd rather live in the big wide places where 'not even a sparrow falleth'."

"Let's see! where did I begin?" Marjorie flipped the pages of her diary eagerly. She had not removed her hat. It still hung to her neck by its rubber band. The contents of the dog-eared and travel-stained telescope lay scattered over the sitting room carpet—the dear little pig smoking set for father and the lovely lilac cream pitcher with its handle broken off that she had bought the very first day in the city, and that had been done and undone so many times it had come to grief. She had bundled out all the clothes, and the bottle of ammonia that wouldn't take out spots, and the box of headache powders Uncle Alfred had gone to the drug store in the middle of the night to get because it might be good for "lump in the throat." From the very bottom she had fished out her thumb-marked diary because it would help her to tell about things.

"Aug. 20," she read, "the city is a terrible place." That was the beginning,—her first glimpse as she and Uncle Alfred stepped out of the cheerful car into the great gray train sheds full of belching, noisy engines and waiting cars. Truckmen shoving heavy burdens and bellowing to clear the road. Anxious people hurrying along the platforms, loaded with valises and bundles. Children crying in the jam, being walked along to the utmost capacity of tiny untried legs. The crowd had gathered and thickened about them from the emptying train, till she was entirely hemmed in and almost lost. All in the world she could see were bodies jamming and crowding one another about, and there was nothing to do but step right along or be trodden under foot. A burly man with a red face and a straw hat on the back of his head had jostled right into her without ever apologizing, and a fat lady with a bird cage and a poodle dog under her arm stumbled into Uncle Alfred and made him lose his cane, and all because the fat woman was afraid she wouldn't get there first.

"There seems to be very little time in the city," she wrote in her entry. "*People* seem to be in a terrible hurry to go somewhere and haven't but a minute to do it in. They are always going and yet they never go. They stay right there for all I can see, jamming and fighting one another about. Even the birds have caught it; they quarrel and peck one another about in the streets and never sing. They seem to be afraid to commence to sing for fear some one will get something away they ought to have had. City birds are very much like city people. When God said: 'Not even a sparrow falleth,' I'm sure there couldn't have been any cities, for no one seems to care at all what becomes of any one else, and I don't see how God can, there are so many." She ran her finger along meditatively.

"Got to the city at six o'clock. The depot is a monstrous place, bigger than our schoolhouse, and the library, and theatre all boiled down, and more imposing. I am sure I shall never feel awe again in my life for I've felt all there is of it. We went up forty-seven steps to even get there. I counted them, and as many more to get out. It seems very foolish to go up steps to get in as long as we only go in to get out. I saw several soldiers, at least I think they were. They wore blue uniforms and caps and appeared very stately. I don't think there is anything in the world so impressive as blue clothes and brass buttons. If I ever marry I hope I shall be fortunate enough to get a soldier or a policeman. I think they are the imposingest sort of people.

"All along the curb there were cabs and cabmen prancing up and down, and some of them even laid hands on Uncle Alfred. It is very embarrassing to be obliged to say 'no' to so many people, though Uncle Alfred says it doesn't matter if you don't in the city. People do not pretend to be polite. I haven't had any use for my manners at all since I came. I'm afraid if I tried to do as the 'Etiquette' book mother gave Jane and me for Christmas says, there wouldn't be enough left of me for Uncle Alfred to carry off in the ambulance. I have a very sore toe already as convincing evidence of this fact. It makes one feel very small and stingy to walk with so many terribly needy cabmen fairly begging one to ride, but after seeing what I have seen I am sure henceforth I can walk right on through them with a very ignoring attitude.

"Horses without tails! Think of it! At first I thought they grew that way, but Uncle Alfred said no, they were docked. That means cut off. Those horrible cabmen cut off their horses' tails. Do you suppose I would ride after a horse with his tail cut off if I walked forever and forever? And that is only one of the terrible things one sees in the city. The city seems to be the gathering place of all the terrible things there are. We hadn't gone a block before we were waylaid by a beggar and three newsboys. One of them wasn't bigger than Dewey Mugg, not a mite. He caught hold of Uncle Alfred's coat tail and hung right on. Uncle Alfred gave the beggar a dime and I gave the boy my sack of crackerjack. You ought to have seen him grin. He didn't smile. People don't smile in the city. If they have to do anything they grin. Their faces seem too stiff to smile. I don't know which is the worst—a little baby for a newsboy or docking horses' tails." She stopped to give Mother Moxie's knee an impetuous squeeze before she turned a fresh page.

"The first thing on our minds, of course, was something to eat," the diary ran. "We passed a great many restaurants before we tried one. They seemed very imposing from the outside, but they are not very satisfying. The glitter soon rubs off when you are on the inside. I am afraid I shall starve if I have to eat in one a week. Everything is so mussy and so slammed at one. They act as though they begrudged you time to eat in, to say nothing of what you ate. Such little measly bits of everything. The bills of fare I find are very deceiving, the most there is of them are names. I pine for one of mother's good fat turnovers. Perhaps I shan't stand so in awe of them the next time I go in and shall eat more, though it is terrible to have a waiter, full seven feet tall and starched so stiff he cannot sit, standing right over you and marking down every little thing you eat. I suppose when I learn to despise him in spite of his starch, as he probably deserves, I shall eat right along and never mind (Uncle Alfred did), though there's no telling what the consequences would be. They'd probably be something appalling. I'd like to know how much it would cost to eat all one wanted just once. A body don't know how to appreciate all the good things when they get them for nothing. Just think! Three little stingy slices of tomato for five cents. Not enough for a smell. And some little slivers off a cucumber, nothing but shavings, really, and five cents, too. I shudder to think how much Uncle Alfred paid for just our supper, and I'm ashamed to say I'm hungry yet. I think I shall be able to even appreciate Jane's experiments if I ever get home alive." She took a vicious bite out of the yellow harvest apple Dick had provided by way of refreshment.

"The place where we are stopping is called the 'Home Hotel,'" she read on. "It is a very solemn place. I find that solemn doesn't mean quiet. This place is very noisy, still it is solemn. If solemn meant quiet there couldn't be anything solemn in the city, for it is impossible to even distinguish the different kinds of noise. It is trucks and street cars and newsboys and people's feet and the Dago man on the corner, all jumbled into one. I have a piece of cotton packed in each ear while I am trying to write this. When I stop to think of all the halls I came through to get to this place I feel as though I were at the end of a Chinese puzzle. I am sure I could never find my way out alone. We turned as many as a dozen corners at least and every one was exactly like the other. Supposing there should be a fire! It is a great comfort to think that Uncle Alfred rooms just across the hall.

"The streets are lighted. I can see them from my window; great dazzling red and blue and green globes, that look like stars come down into the street. I can see a great row of them that spells out a word, and now they are blue and now they are red and now they are white. The city is much prettier in the night than in the daytime, because one can't see the smoke that gets all over one and blurs things, and one can have the lights that man made. Then, in the daytime one sees all the stains and there isn't anything to take the place of the things God made and one can't have in the city.

"Speaking of smoke, I am terribly mussed up already. I never saw anything as filthy as my face and hands were when I got to this place. I'm afraid mother will be shocked at sight of my new suspender dress. It certainly does look fierce; but it cannot be helped as I see. Between Frederick Abijah Moses and the train smoke and coming to the city and everything it has had a hard racket. I'm very glad I didn't wear my slippers; as long as I keep them in the bandbox they will be a comfort to me.

"People keep passing my door every minute, then sometimes they don't, and it is terribly solemn. There's a dog howling somewhere. I feel as though it was a bad sign. I imagine mother is setting the cakes about now, and Jane is brushing her hair for bed. I'm not sleepy. I—" She skipped several lines guiltily. She couldn't help putting in a few words about its being the first night, etc. She wasn't homesick just the same. Even Uncle Alfred said she had been a brave little woman. And she wouldn't have been home yet if Uncle Alfred hadn't gotten the rheumatism. She didn't know as missing mother's good-night kiss was anything to be ashamed of anyhow. She turned a fresh page.

"Aug. 21," it read. "So much has happened I hardly know where to begin. In the first place, isn't the elevator a funny invention? I know a merry-go-round and even a Ferris wheel is faded for me from now on. I have gone up and down six times and it is just as new as ever. I don't mind it so much going up, but coming down it feels as though all the screws had fallen out that holds my stomach up. I wonder if it makes every one feel as it does me? Uncle Alfred don't seem to mind it; but looks peaceful all the way down while it is all I can do to keep from doubling up. And the worst of it is I can't tell for the life of me whether it makes me miserable or happy. Anyhow I like to do it, I'd stay right there and ride all day if I could. Only I'm afraid sometime I'll make a noise and disgrace Uncle Alfred.

"Well, I have spent all my money and I suppose I ought to be satisfied, though I wish I hadn't, for I've seen so many perfectly beautiful things since. Isn't it a trial to pass by hundreds and hundreds of things you just want and not have a cent to bless yourself with? I'm sure I have had a lesson in denying myself.

"Oh, mother!" She laid her head over in Mother Moxie's lap. "Are you sure you wouldn't rather have had a lovely owl vase with beautiful sheeny gray feathers, and great golden eyes, and the flowers went right in the top of his head? Wouldn't that have been nicer than a lilac pitcher? And are you sure you can fix the handle just as good as new? I could have got a lovely pillow top for Jane with the dearest little cupids' heads painted all over it instead of this lace collar, too," she mused regretfully.

"Do you s'pose father will like this?" She turned the smoking set round and round on her palm. "I thought those little pink pigs were the sweetest things when I saw them; but afterwards I saw some of the cunningest little rabbits. Their little white fuzzy tails were so pretty. I really believe father would have liked the bunnies best, though these little pigtails *have* got a cute quirk to them, haven't they? And that little old trough to scratch ashes in is a dear, and the wooden bucket for matches, and the barrel to hold his tobacco. I paid twenty-five cents for it," she said remorsefully. "I could have had a lovely silver match safe to have carried in his pocket for that, or a pretty pearl-handled paper knife to have laid on his desk. Which do you think he would rather have had?

"Now, don't lie, Dick! *Do* you like what I got you or would you rather have had the funniest, funniest mask for Halloween, or a dear little buttonhole bouquet that when you pinch it from in under squirts perfume right in somebody's face? I could have got that or the comicalist Jack-in-the-box, that when you touched a spring, went clear to the ceiling. Are you *sure* you care for that little poky old knife, that after all hasn't got anything in it but just a mess of corkscrews and one thing another? I thought I did at first; but I've seen so many things—" She sighed.

"Oh, I'm so glad, glad, glad to be home!" She patted the checks in Mother Moxie's gingham apron. "Isn't it big and comfortable and roomy?" She swept her arm out with a broad gesture of freedom. "It's so nice to be able to hear one's self think."

"It hadn't ought to have been so very bad. You only stayed three days and you were going to stay a week, you know?" Jane twitted.

"Thought you weren't going to be homesick!" Dick gave her a sly poke. "If I couldn't tough it out more'n three days. Whatever brought you home if you weren't homesick?"

"I told you once I was sick," Marjorie defended herself, "—and so was Uncle Alfred. He had the rheumatism, and I—I had a headache and a funny feeling. I couldn't describe it. It seemed in my lungs at first, but it got up into my throat. 'Lump in the throat,' Uncle Alfred called it. It felt like a hickory nut. It didn't bother me much daytimes, only nights. You see, I roomed alone, and sometimes when I went to bed it seemed as though I should—choke." She slipped a hand shyly into Mother Moxie's. "Uncle Alfred thought as we both had symptoms, we might better be at home. We might be coming down with something, you know!"

"Let me look down your throat, dear!" Mother Moxie suggested anxiously. "Are there any lumps? Is it very sore?"

"It seems to be all right now," Marjorie confessed. "I think I felt the last twinge when I saw you and Dick and Jane running to meet me. Oh, I wonder if it is as cool and comfortable and lovely anywhere in the world as it is here!"

"I saw a great goose," she read from her diary. "It was in a tailor shop window and kept nodding its head. I thought it was real, but Uncle Alfred said it was a sign. I also saw an elephant that did the same thing, only it kept rolling its eyes and every little while it picked up a piece of candy with its trunk. This seemed a very natural act. I stood in the window watching it while Uncle Alfred went to get a cigar. It seems very wonderful that they can make signs like that. I suppose when he gets full of candy they empty him out. It must be lovely to be able to eat all the time and never get full. I'm afraid I would roll my eyes worse than that if I did. I also saw a window of dolls, great, big mamma dolls, as big as I am, and children dolls of all sizes. One of them was rocking her little baby to sleep, and a party of little girl dolls was having tea. One was playing the piano, and a boy and girl doll were waltzing. In one window a woman with a sunbonnet on was churning and a man out in the field was cradling wheat. I would like to know how they made the wheat stand up.

"I don't know but the city is as wonderful as it is terrible. The two principal feelings I have had since I came are horrified and amazed. I certainly am amazed over some of the things I have seen to-day, for now I am going to put something in this book that compared with it nothing else I shall ever put in this or any other will seem like anything. I have been to the theatre. The very biggest one in the city, Uncle Alfred said it was. It is now twelve o'clock and I am not sleepy at all, and I don't think I ever shall be again.

"The elevator is one sort of a sensation, and being glad or sad or cold or hungry is just one; but the theatre is all sorts mixed together, anyhow they follow one another so fast that the laugh gets right into the cry. My face ached when I got home from being changed so many times. I have been oh! so sorry, and so glad, glad, glad, and have had cold shivers ever and ever so many times! I actually believe my hair *has* stood up at last, though I didn't have time to see till it was over. Think of a horrible man chaining you hand and foot and dragging you off by the hair, and little Fi-fi stolen by that horrible old woman and made to beg! Wasn't she sweet and dear, and wasn't it enough to bring tears from a stone, say! to see her standing out in the snow and sleet with nothing on but rags and crying for her own lost mamma! Wasn't it blood curdling when those two men met in the woods and fought a duel? And I was so afraid the hero would be killed instead of the villain, and then what would become of the beautiful heroine chained in the castle and kept on bread and water! And when those officers came to the fisherman's cabin, and brave little Doris shielded Howard Wright, and helped him to escape by rowing him across the channel in that terrible storm! My! how high and white the breakers were, and how the sea roared! I was afraid the boat would be swamped every minute. How green and angry the storm looked, and how the lightning flashed! Wasn't that enough to make one's hair prickly?—And then when Howard Wright crept upon those robbers in the cave and listened to all their evil plots, even slying in and snatching the valuable papers that proved little Fi-fi's birthright and restored her to her parents! I feel as though I had been every one of them and lived every one of their lives.

"Isn't the theatre a wonderful thing when one can live a whole lifetime every night and suffer and be glad, and be defeated and victorious? No matter how plain a body's life really is, with nothing at all interesting happening, here they can live in the most exciting scenes, and be really great and noble and do brave deeds. And I've thought of several ways in which the theatre is a real benefit. I'm going to prove it to Grandma Grubbins when I go home. In the first place it shows one how really useless crime is after all, and how the villain always gets the worst of it in the end. There it is just as plain as the nose on your face without experimenting. Carter Chase, who was a villain and just as wicked as he could be, got hung, and lost every friend he had in the world, and didn't even have a funeral; and Howard Wright got all the money in the hidden zinc box and married the beautiful heroine besides.

"When one is living things it goes so slow that one can't get the effect, and sometimes it doesn't seem worth while to be kept in horrible places on bread and water and dragged through all sorts of wretched things for the sake of being a heroine, but on the stage one sees and one can't help pitying the poor villain, if he does wear the most diamonds, because you can see all along the trap he's getting himself into. The good ones all come out on top. Didn't sweet little Fi-fi get back to her lovely home on the Rhine, and have a maid to curl her beautiful hair in the last act? And didn't brave Doris get her handsome sailor lad out of the jaws of the sea? And didn't poor, sweet Lady Graymere get Howard Wright, and all that was coming to her, and come out just as blooming as a rose before the curtain fell, even if she was beaten and starved and about dead of a broken heart?

"When a body sees how many lifetimes they could live through if they went to the theatre every night, how many tragedies they could suffer through without dying, just living one doesn't seem like much of a task. Why, after knowing what that poor lady suffered chained in that terrible fashion, do you suppose that anything that could ever happen to me would seem like anything at all? Seeing people who are brave or patient or good, even on the stage, ought to help some, hadn't it? Wouldn't it be nice if a person could be as sweet as Fi-fi, as brave as Doris, as patient as Lady Graymere, and as noble as Howard Wright? Would that be too much to have all in one?

"If I lived in the city I should spend a great deal of money going to the theatres for the development of my character. The church and the theatre are very much the same; one illustrates what the other teaches. I am going to stop now and draw a picture of the villain and dear little Fi-fi and the horrible old woman to show to mother.

"Aug. 22. I wonder what will take out wagon grease! Something sad and terrible has befallen me. I'm sure mother will be sadly shocked and father horrified. I've had a fight. I clawed and dug a man. I hoped I should not be called upon to exhibit my talents in that direction, but it seems I have been. Uncle Alfred upheld me in it, though very mildly. It was over a horse, a poor dilapidated creature, beside which old Dobbins is a frisky steed prancing and dancing along the highway. He had high cheek bones behind.

"Let me say before I begin to write down how it happened that I am glad for every lick I got in and only wish I could double them. I never knew that it would be real comfort to hit anybody before, but I find out that it sometimes is. With every cut I gave I felt joy looming up inside of me. Perhaps hereafter I shall try it oftener.

"We were just hurrying to catch a car and there he was in the alley, hitched to an ugly black wagon, loaded with coal. He was just doubling up with misery till his skin wrinkled and his master was beating him with a monstrous club. I didn't wait for any introduction, I can tell you that. There are some things I will never stand by and see, and I have found out one thing, I can put up quite a fight if it is necessary. It may not be very ladylike, but it is very considerate, especially of the horse.

"I *ran* at the man and we had it right and left.

He didn't dare to strike me and I didn't let him strike the horse. I—I called him names—a—a 'miserable old pelter' I think was the worst, but he was ferocious and swore something furious. I think it is ridiculous to let one's temper get away with one.

"We called quite a crowd, I can tell you, and by and by Uncle Alfred came up and a policeman with a big club. You ought to have seen the man sober down. He didn't swear any more, though he almost choked trying to stop it. The policeman unhitched the horse from the heavy coal wagon and led him away just as cool as a cucumber on ice, while the man just stood and shook his fist, growing blacker every minute with things he didn't dare to say. I never saw any one so mad before in all my life. Uncle Alfred led me away rejoicing. I note here for Jane's benefit that this is one instance where my interference was very effectual, indeed—one horse liberated, one coal driver punished, one policeman busy. I call that a pretty good stroke. It seems to me I have heard that ammonia will take out wagon grease. Uncle Alfred is going to get some in the morning.

"Every day I see terrible things that I can't forget—horses beaten, pitiful beggars crawling on the walk, tired little children who can't smile. I wonder if I should live here a very, very long time I would get so I didn't mind? No one else seems to mind. They walk right through it and never seem to see. Maybe seeing so much of it and not being able to help it would cure one, but it seems to me it would only make it worse. I should keep feeling and feeling till it got so big in here I should have to do something or burst. I don't want to live where I get so hard and wicked I can't feel. I'd rather live in the big wide places where 'not even a sparrow falleth'.

"We went to the park in the afternoon and saw the animals, and somehow they looked ever so much more natural than the people. The big old lion with his paws folded before the bars was the most sympathetic and natural-looking person I've seen since I came. I had quite a visit with him and he seemed to understand. The grass looked good. What can take the place of grass and sky? There were signs to keep off; but Uncle Alfred and I didn't. We sat, and I rolled once or twice when no one was looking; but Uncle Alfred didn't. Perhaps he isn't as used to rolling in grass as I am. I tell you it did seem good. It was real grass, too. It seemed good to find something that was real after so much make-believe. They were real animals too, with real howls. I heard a wolf howl twice. It certainly did give me a creepy feeling.

"We sat and watched the swans and ducks and geese and things sailing around on the little ponds. They seemed to be enjoying themselves the best of anything. It was a relief to me to find something that wasn't miserable. I wanted to forget the dear little robin I had seen among the captive birds. I didn't mind looking at the parrots or the pheasants or the lovely golden finches; but when we came to the lark of the morning all humped up in a pitiful little heap, and the precious brown thrush looking so sad, and our own little robin I coaxed Uncle Alfred to come away. I didn't want to look any longer. Do you know what the man said? I asked him if the poor little thing wasn't sick, and if he hadn't better do something for him, and he said: 'Oh, no! They always die. They won't stand caging, but they're plentiful. We always can put in another.' Think of it! Always a robin dying in there of a broken heart. I should think that would spoil the pleasure of it for any one. I asked him why he didn't let it out before it died, when it was only ill, and he knew it was going to, and let it grow well and happy again and forget how cruel people were; but he never answered me. I asked him why they needed to have a robin. Weren't the birds for the people to see, and couldn't they see hundreds of happy ones hopping about in the grass outside? And who wanted to see a dying robin?—And weren't the dear little squirrels, that ran all over the park and were so tame they ate nuts right out of your hand, a thousand times prettier than the wild-eyed little thing that hid in the farthest corner of the cage and wouldn't come out for anybody? But he walked right away and never even pretended to hear, though I caught hold of his sleeve and tried to stop him.

"I did enjoy seeing the tiny ponies and Uncle Alfred let me ride on one. He jogged along so slow and easy and looked so very fat. How I do love to see things comfortable! If I ever get to be very, very rich, I shall buy the Zoo and set the animals free; I believe I will take about as much comfort with my money that way as any other.

"I *do* hope Jane has seen to feeding the poor mamma wren who lost her husband. I am not feeling very well to-night. I have the headache and blistered feet, and a terribly strange feeling. Uncle Alfred got some powders, but they don't seem to be very effective. I believe I'll go in and let him rub my head." The entries came to an end abruptly. Marjorie tossed the diary into the heap and climbed out over the wreck.

"Well, anyhow, I'm thankful I'm better," she said encouragingly. "I believe if I have a good square meal now I shall be all right and able to write up my experiences for the *Northrum Weekly Courier.*"

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